THE BOOKMAN

VOLUME LXXIV November 1931 NUMBER 3

THE FAITH OF A WRITER IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by R. H. Mottram

THE title of this article presupposes first that all men are considered to have some guiding principle, some thought-out scheme of life, by the light of which they work and against which they measure and judge the problems of thought and action. A man may or may not have one of the recognized religious faiths. I am using the word to denote the general application of whatever is his deliberate conception of existence to his actions. Secondly, the title presupposes that everyone understands and agrees as to the definition of the word writer. Both these suppositions are subject to doubt, and the doubt arises mainly as to the second of them. What sort of person is a writer, and what is his particular sort of Faith likely to be, in this or in any other century?

Now it is easy enough to take the word writer, as one would so much prefer to take all words, at its face value. Indeed, not so long ago, we might have said that a writer is simply a wielder of the pen, a scrivener. But we live in a time when life has been possibly enriched and certainly complicated by the fact that practically everybody now writes and reads. How recent is the establishment of this state of things some of us are already beginning to forget. My own experience of business career in a very subordinate grade forces upon me the knowledge that as late as 1900, the threshold of the century, illiteracy in the exact as distinct from the profound sense of the word was extremely common, and has, since that date, nearly disappeared. So that we must needs be a little more precise as to the meaning of the term "writer". And this leads us to consider what writing is actually being done daily by our own crowded and rather frantically living English-speaking populations. Obviously there would be little interest in discussing the mental and spiritual complexion of every person who, in the pursuit of the necessities of life, uses our alphabet, for that would mean practically the entire population, and there would be little virtue in the distinction. But I must notice in passing the fact of our

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

modern superficial universal literacy. It has a very apposite bearing upon the writer, in the narrower sense in which I am going to define him. A good deal of cant is talked about the beautiful simplicity of character and sterling qualities of the past generation but one, which was largely superficially illiterate, and more than made up for the loss, according to some, by its aptness in the use of other means of communication and record.

I must dissent most strongly from this unwarrantably picturesque view. I happen to have been most exceptionally fortunate in being situated so that I saw with my own eyes the final stages of the great change, from a town full of folk that mostly could not read or write, to one which can, however deplorably it may employ such a boon, at least spell out the printed word and make something more than a single incoherent mark upon paper. I was born, and continued to work until I was forty-four, in a house that overlooked the main street of one of the most average cities in England, one which was neither too small to have a strong local consciousness, nor yet so large as to have been excessively specialized; neither entirely rebuilt, nor wholly remaining as eight fateful centuries had made it; neither hopelessly remote, nor entirely dominated by London or any other great metropolis. And I bear witness to the fact that the crowds in that street, in the eighties, were far more attracted by spectacles of brutal violence, fights and public executions and the forcing of animals to perform antics, or merely to do work unnatural to any animal, than they are today. Occasionally we are shocked by revelations of human propensities which we call perverse or sadist. We forget that in my boyhood the common unreproved pastime of the boys of large towns was to watch the proceedings in the slaughter-house, because it was then considered entertaining to see blood run and life extinguished. Those things are changed.

Most of all I remember the silly unreasoning panics into which the literally illiterate of those days could be flung by the feeblest rumour of some unexpected event. Do not let me be understood as defending the doubtful honesty, the dreary vulgarity, the unutterable bathos in which we must fear millions of modern breakfast tables and of short journeys in the train are submerged by the license now accorded to the commercial Press. Nauseating as such things may be, they are not only gentler but far less effective in their influence upon the nation. Think of the early days of August, 1914. There was matter for all sorts of social upheaval which in fact had been predicted if such circumstances ever should arise. But no upheaval occurred. I wonder what sort of fortitude our grandparents would have shown before the noise of Sevastopol and the horrors of Cawnpore, had those towns of ill-omen been situated in Belgium. This great change is most important to the writer. It means that his possibly huge new public cannot be easily allured or stampeded.

And one word more before we return from this excursion to our subject: let us not forget that the common indiscriminate use of our alphabet is already being superseded. The whole tendency of mechanical invention since the war has been to substitute the visual image or oral means of communication for the printed word. Of this development I must speak later. But at the moment it leaves me all the more free to concentrate upon one particular use of writing. The writer, as I now speak of him, is the writer of what is called Fiction pure and simple. This is a much more exclusive distinction than at first appears. It excuses me from surveying the work of the scholar and the divine,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

though many of both categories are very great artists in words. Yet they use their words for a definite purpose of record or expression; they do not employ the verbal image for its own sake, but for their own purposes. I go much further than that. The dramatist writes a foundation for another medium, so do all those whose writing is but a basis for some mechanical reproduction. The poet writes what was originally either a form of words to go to music, or, it may be, longer versified but not necessarily rhymed pieces that have their origin in religious expression of a primitive kind. Verse has been used for historical, satiric or merely patriotic purposes. Nor do I discuss the essay. I want to speak of the writer who uses words as a painter uses charcoal and paint, as an actor uses his voice and person, as a musician uses another notation than language upon his instrument.

There is more than one reason for considering sympathetically the case of the artist in words. He suffers from several specific disabilities. He cannot rely, as we hope the poet still does, on a kind of visitation of the spirit. He is essentially a modern product. Yet the very considerable vogue that his art enjoys at the present time renders it a subject worthy of inquiry.

Of the enormous mass of printed matter that issues from the publishing houses of the United Kingdom alone—14,000 volumes in 1929, nearly 16,000 in 1930—80 percent consists of what we now call fiction. That use of prose is comparatively recent, and if we exclude the short story, and recognize the inevitable didactic tendency of the fable and fairy tale, we may say it is of eighteenth-century origin. True, its diverse elements were to be found earlier in political and moral satire, in *contes* and legends and character studies. But the novel proper, the simulated life story of an imaginary person so nearly lifelike as to be credibly typical of a period or social class, passing through various adventures, against a readily identified background of scenery and occasion is well known to have been born in London in the early decades of the eighteenth century, though its exact parentage is still a matter of dispute. I think that its most striking characteristics are to be found in the motives which presumably prompt its writing, and the object it is designed to achieve. No other form of art that I can think of owes so much to personal vanity or material need. Often when I come across cases of blatant self-advertisement, or when I am saddened by the singing of some pitiable reject of our contemporary industrial system in a suburban street, I say to myself:

"There, but for the grace of God, goes another less than first-rate novelist!"

I will not use of the novel the term often applied to another mixed form—that of Opera. Let us leave it that it is a mixed form, and its object is mainly entertainment —the charming of the leisure hour—in a fashion more sophisticated, less elemental and primitive, than the direct and ancient appeal of the other arts to stronger emotions.

I am not here, however, to expose the novelist, but to interpret him, if I may.

His disabilities, which at once limit yet confirm his faith, lie partly in the very nature of his art, partly in the circumstances that have lately developed around it. The actual thing which he tries to do does not bring him, most unfortunately, into contact with any real tangible material obstacle. He has not to handle palette nor a keyboard, much less to make his words, as he goes along, as, for instance, a violinist or singer has to form the actual notes, without mechanical aid. The novelist's words are ready-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coined and have varied little since the writing for entertainment became usual. I do not say that he has to do nothing to obtain cadence in his sentences, or to enrich the images he calls up by scrupulous and judicious choice of words. But the latter faculty at least has other uses.

Dangerous as it may be to try and drag analogies from one art to another, I am irresistibly reminded of the career of the painter John Crome. He began, it is well known, as a coach and sign painter. That is to say, he used pigment on variously shaped surfaces to protect those surfaces from the weather, and, further, so far as ornament and blazoning go in coachwork and more particularly in sign painting, he had to use visual images as substitute for words. But the inarticulate Norwich boy had a vision. He began to see other uses for shape and colour, he actually succeeded in covering pieces of wood or canvas, not merely in order to preserve them, nor merely to evoke upon them symbols that conveyed more fully than the words do what appeared to him to be "Mousehold Heath" and "Moonrise on the Scheldt". He achieved a deep spirituality in painting, so that common objects such as a willow tree or a boulevard rose above their lower state as layers of paint, above their state as common facts, above heraldic or commercial symbolism, and became profoundly moving, capable of letting loose within us tides of emotion, and canalizing those tides into a deep stream of thankfulness for newly revealed or interpreted beauty, which, although not quite a pure spiritual experience, is a marvellous aid to the realization of the glory of God.

It would not be difficult to parallel Crome's case in music. Technically efficient music, to which has entered a certain vision, a certain supernal excitement, goes straight to the part of us at which our concrete physical bodies shade off in the nerves into something only remotely connected with this world. But the notes in terms of which a musician works are unmistakable things. If he produces a woolly sound that is not mathematically in the center of the note it purports to be, that fact is as demonstrable as are the treacly forgeries of Crome's brush strokes.

The artist in words has none of the advantages of this factual discipline. Alas, there is neither mathematics nor manual dexterity in his art to stiffen it. His notation is all so mental, exactitude in the use of words is always very subtle, and not infrequently a matter of fashion. The prose of so great a literary artist as Samuel Johnson owes some of its present vogue to a certain archaism in the diction. Contrast this with the fact that the scale in which Bach wrote is identically the one in which we play him today. If the prose writer is conscientious he has to recast a debased coinage. It is hardly possible, short of sheer inanity, to misuse any other medium of artistic expression as the language of our country can be misused. The writer of fiction has, however, some excuse in the fact that his art has developed almost exactly at the same time as the immense impetus lent to commerce by the organization of the credit system. His product can be multiplied indefinitely by machinery, in response to demand, and sold as are only those articles that can be made into packets of convenient size at uniform and relatively low price. The sort of vogue that photography and the gramophone have only just brought to painting and music has been common to the novel for nearly two centuries.

Small wonder if the writer of fiction has all too frequently succumbed to the temptations that beset his path. They are many and alluring. His main object being avowedly to entertain, and only secondly to edify, it is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

almost too likely that he has softened the stern outline of reality, and muffled, as far as in him lies, the awful voice of doom. As the public for whom he mainly writes, the secure, the comfortable, the leisured, the unconstrained, have been separated step by step from the imminent dangers to life and limb, the stark religious creeds, the imperious temporal powers that dogged the footsteps of his forerunners, the Elizabethan dramatist, the Caroline lyric poet, the novelist has descended in many cases to the unction of the inevitable happy ending, and laid on all too thickly the bright attractive colours of romance. That word, in fact, is most informative. It recalls to us the anciently established notion prevalent when the word was first applied to the literature of distraction, that such writing as his is only possible in states of high civilization, the previous phase of which was the Roman one.

There is one more circumstance of the writer's craft that we must notice, and that is the most recent. In the days of authoritative criticism, the days of great reviews and dominating personalities, a certain order was kept by the magisterial critic, and standards remained high, if only by sheer example of undoubted masters. But in this, as in everything else, the day of the Superman is over. Were there ever Supermen? There is no view to which distance lends such enchantment as the view of human nature. Were great Sir Walter, and the inimitable Boz, Spectator Thackeray and the sage of Dorchester more than ordinary beings, not so much to their valets as to their bankers, above all to themselves? Perhaps not, but at least they were all people who were doing something for the first time. There was no great romantic, heavily documented school of historical novel before Scott. Dickens and his great rival did something that had never been done before quite as they did it, certainly not with the direct and obvious effect upon the life of the nation that they produced. As for Hardy, he was so much an innovator that he laid down his pen in disgust at the incomprehension with which he was assailed.

In common here with practitioners of the other arts, the novelist finds it very difficult to discover any really fresh subject, and even more difficult to invent any fresh method of treatment. It might have seemed that a great modern war would have provided a fresh subject. Curiously enough, very few writers indeed touched it for full ten years after the cessation of hostilities, just the period at which an event gets sufficiently remote to become touched by romance—and even a slight touch of romance works wonders. Then when suddenly, some eighteen months or more ago, the rush of war books came, it seemed as if the subject were too much for the receptive faculties of most of the writers. Few balanced broadly conceived works of art resulted, and there was a perhaps inevitable tendency to romanticize or, by merely reversing the process, to become unduly photographic; while in many cases the immense subject, cosmic in extent, became simply the background for shrill personal adventure, particularly on the part of those persons who had the advantage of not having participated very closely in the struggle.

Nor have the attempts to discover and adapt new forms for the prose of distraction been any happier. The most considerable contributions to the extending of the art of fiction have been made by women, and have been in the direction of a fuller exploitation of the limitless feminine sensibility, almost to the point of dissolving the usual structure of prose into a sort of semi-conscious soliloquy. At first sight it might seem that this

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

method would yield an infinite variety of treatment of old subjects thus seen not merely in an extremely personal and detailed way, but dealt with on a plan completely free of the slightly artificial canons of the good plot, and limited only by the necessity for sustaining interest and not bewildering the intelligence. Unfortunately this method soon showed even greater limitations than the most conventional love story, bounded on the one side by innocence and on the other by marriage. For the fact is that when the writer's personality is reduced to its simplest form in a kind of sleep-walking monologue, it loses rather than gains variety, human nature at that barely articulate level being very much all of a piece, and its perceptive powers necessarily curtailed.

So that the earnest and conscientious writer of fiction today who desires to do the best that in him lies, influenced as little as may be by material consideration, who desires to portray with fidelity, and to make his necessarily restricted contribution to the enrichment, the true enrichment, of the emotional life of man, is brought most uncompromisingly face to face with the limitations of his art and of himself.

And this, I believe, is all to the good. It throws him back upon those vital fundamentals which should provide his only motive and object. Thus there is every opportunity today for the writer to reaffirm his basic creed, and replenish himself at the real fountain of inspiration.

He should bless the occasion. Not for him the easy excitement of periods of material prosperity and rapid rather obvious advance. The age of Victoria—which has no greater admirer than I—may perhaps have been one of these. So much was going on, and all of it going forward, that the theory widely if not very explicitly held in that time, of a continual and inevitable general progress of mankind, as though human existence was one unending inclined plane of universal betterment, was, to say the least, excusable. The men of the neo-classic eighteenth century had said: "After us, the Deluge!" The Victorians appear to me to have ridden on the crest of that visitation. That accounts, I think, for an extraordinary quality in their fiction, which I cannot easily define, and which no one today can exactly emulate. It is best seen perhaps if we ask ourselves, neglecting modesty for the moment, what is wrong with the women of Dickens. Do we or do we not feel in his female characterization a certain lack extending to the work of those who write most nearly in his manner? If we do, is it perhaps that his immense, if slightly hectic, vitality obscured for him the eternal gulf between masculine and feminine, as much as it obscured any foreknowledge of the attempt of our own day to build a tenuous bridge across that gulf, between the two irreconcilable parts of human nature? He must have known better than many of his portrayals, we cannot help believing, if only on account of the actual circumstances of his life. And if I seem unwittingly to speak dispraise of him, I will point out that he was not alone in this; the same lack of depth, the same unreal smoothness of surface appears in the women characters of the women writers of his period.

To Jane Austen we owe some of the most charming portraits of women that adorn our literature. But they have rather the air of miniatures than of full-sized human beings. Little more than the face, and that as if done upon ivory, is seen.

In the Brontës' darker pictures we have what amounts to a sex-inferiority complex, and even the wide range of that almost New Woman, George Eliot, does not altogether

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

avoid a certain corseting of the mind. The influence, whatever it was, is visible right up to Hardy and Meredith. If James avoided it, that may be because he dealt so exclusively with states of mind and refinements of expression that the actual human compost hardly concerned him.

We may believe, then, that during a period when such a treatment of one of the most important influences that colour life was general, there was little need for the writer of fiction to torment himself, or herself, with deep searchings of the soul as to the basis of his art and its predictable future. The twentieth century, poor as it must, as it should, seem to us, by comparison with the Golden Age that closed in February, 1901, has at least the advantage of an extreme disillusionment. Its first thirty years have been weighted with a disaster unparalleled for many centuries, whose gravity, as I have indicated, has, in my belief, frustrated its adequate treatment in art. But a generation is already growing up to which that event is a matter of hearsay. The world of 1931, marked for us with obvious signs of devastation, is to them the normal world than which they know no other, and the accounts we give of losses sustained seem to me to leave little impression.

Saddening as this may be for us, we must recognize it as only right and indeed necessary. We wish human life to go on, with as large a measure of undaunted hope as may be possible to it. As on those financial occasions when stocks and shares after standing at fantastic premiums suffer a reduction to their face value or below, there is to new purchasers an actual diminution of risk, and promise of satisfactory yield. So may it be to those now able to set out upon a career in the art of fiction. They start fair, not in a period of inflated values. That is the first boon. The second is this: The career itself is crowded. The young aspirant will be told that his work cannot be published until he has won for himself a name, which, of course, he can only win by being published.

He must then write sufficiently well to attract the notice of someone of established reputation who will enable him to get a footing on the slippery threshold, not of fame, but of a very moderate publicity. True, the egregious commercialism from which bookselling is no more exempt than any other market is as likely as ever it was to push forward mere scintillation, proclaimed as brilliance, or simple lack of reticence, quaintly advertised as moral courage. The remedy is, after all, with the whole body of the reading public. Where morbid preoccupations, or jejune sentiment, or a belated intention to measure the world by a new set of values occupies more than a due proportion of a volume, the intelligent reader has only to ask himself if, in fact, a rather better than normal human character—for characters in fiction have to be taken, like securities in a probate valuation, at their mean price, plus a fraction—does, in fact, spend thirty weeks out of any year, or thirty years, let us say, out of a lifetime, in pondering or being influenced by such unusual elements.

In practice this is what occurs. Only the very rare, the very finest writing must rest content, as it may well be satisfied to do, with neglect and obscurity. The moderately good, tinctured with a sort of excusable worldliness that cannot be excluded from human affairs, will not fail to get itself noticed. The thoroughly false will certainly be found out. Could we not instance more than one grossly over-valued best-seller of the last ten years, the very name of which is scarcely remembered? And, most striking of all, the enormously expensive, reiterative and irritat-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing confetti bath of advertisement falls to the ground and is trodden under foot unnoticed. Perhaps it cancels out.

Such are the first steps in the path of the novelist of the twentieth century: an introduction or other entry to publication and an unregulated but roughly effective trial with criticism and publicity.

We need not consider genius. Genius has been defined as an unusual capacity for taking pains. It always seemed to me, on the contrary, to consist in being so endowed as to be able to dispense with effort. Those who possess it are more likely to be poets than novelists, and are, in any case, meet for admiration rather than discussion.

Let us follow the path of the moderately successful writer of fiction—one who has received sufficient material encouragement, and support from his publisher, to go on and see if he has more than one book in him.

So far, no great strain has been put upon his normal human belief in the Universe as a mysterious but neither monstrous nor senseless system. He may have come thus far by pressure of the lightest motives with which we have credited him—vanity or need. Very likely he has years of unsuccessful effort behind him. If so he is lucky. He has, then, a reserve of observation to draw upon. For somewhere about the time of the producing of his second book comes his test. All sorts of accidents may have affected his first, the weight of the introduction he enjoyed, some chance contemporary event, possibly some novel point of view or trick of presentation that has earned him a name for originality. It may even be that he is a one-book man, has been drawn by some peculiarity, possibly by his feeling for observation, into one book, and then he is most to be pitied. Now is his time of trial. He will have no adventitious aid with his second book. Reviewers who must needs discover new authors frequently cannot discover him a second time. On the whole, he is lucky if his first book was not too successful, so that he has escaped the awful monotony of endless repetition in increasingly meaningless tone, of praise of something he already regards as part of his past.

He now has a "name" of varying dimension, which comprises his renown with persons he has amused, and persons he has interested and even deeply moved, and mixtures of all three in varying degrees. He now has to do it, not again, but in continuity. Has he really an art worth mentioning?

Excluding the case of the humorous writer, or the mystery or horror monger, there is firm ground for him to stand on, unless he himself has undermined it. There is a body of people in Great Britain and the Colonies, and a curiously incalculable counterpart of it in North America and elsewhere, which, while forming part of or including the amusement public, does definitely want the novel written more or less in the form that Henry Fielding had the largest share in establishing. This body varies from 2,000 to over 100,000 in number, and not the wisest publisher or critic knows exactly what reception they will give to any book of any author. But they constitute a definite demand for the form of art the writer of fiction can create if he is worth his salt. Somewhere between History, Biography, Satire, Drama, is an empty space that none of those four Arts or Sciences can fill, but into which the novel will fit if . . .

If what? That is hard to say. Certainly no going about to cozen fortune will find that exact, that central spot. Any chance element of surprise or strangeness, or mere luck that gets a first book over, will not help a second one. On the contrary.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I believe that nothing counts in the writing of the best fiction so much as the extent to which the novelist has given himself up to his task. He has three operations to perform. Reception of impression, selection, and reproductive interpretation, but all are vitalized by this fundamental act of sacrifice. If he really cares for what he writes about, if he has made himself the vehicle of some good news (which is what his name means) to the uttermost point at which a human being can become a printed book, then something, however awkward his style, or remote or unwelcome his subject, will shine through his pages and attract the only sort of attention worth attracting. That is the novelist's faith, if not immediately, yet surely. Conviction is perhaps a better word than faith for this quality, though it is inadequate. The event will be happier and simpler if the author has schooled himself to limpidity of style and brevity, and has that golden sanity that enables his fellow creatures to share readily his emotions. He need not have those drawbacks of genius that are usual in, and perhaps necessary to, a great poet. But there is no gainsaying that Meredith, Hardy and James, to take three very great names, had, to say the least of it, peculiarities of mental process and verbal expression. That they reached the position we gladly accord them can only be due to their having invested their physical vitality in their work to an extent that makes the phrase "Written in the Heart's Blood" truer than perhaps it sounds.

I am not saying that honesty is the best policy, that the public is wise, the critics omniscient, authors totally disinterested and publishers philanthropists. In practice, of course, the sorting out takes a long while. Justice in these matters moves slowly.

So the writer works, as the miner does, and each book makes the next more difficult, not in its handling, but because, like the miner's product, it has to come further.

And there comes a day when the novelist has to begin to look back. Old age is now in most professions a matter of statutory limitations. The novelist's comes rather when he feels he has nothing more to say, or perhaps when his children arrive at years at which they ask him if he really wrote all those books. Then his faith is tested. There are his books, in a row. The poet who was his contemporary has quite probably burnt himself out and disappeared. The dramatist has been busy fitting together his endless puzzle, and may now be occupied in catering for millions by mechanical means. The scholar and the professional man have long found their appropriate niches. But the writer, what has he done? He has made up stories. He has tried to make them true to life rather than true to fact. Some have been applauded, some have not. No one, not his best friend, not his most penetrating critic, knows so exactly as he what he put into them. He has had his career, he cannot have it over again. It matters supremely to him, what he has put into those stories.

It is a comfort if fortune has been kind enough to spare him from actual want. Often that is not the case. If it is, well. But apart from such banalities, what remains? Not the paragraphs in the newspapers, he has ceased to be "news". Not the requests to do this and that, to appear in certain company, and lend his autograph to collections. There remain to him the things he has made; if, then, he has been faithful, which means filled with Faith, his achievement has a certain solidity. This becomes known to a small circle, who inform a larger circle, so that he may, if all else is propitious, have some small respect paid to him, but that is not his justification.

He is fortunate if he is justified by Faith.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

H. G. WELLS AND THE VICTORIANS

by Stuart P. Sherman

EDITOR'S NOTE:—*The visit of Mr. Wells to this country provides an occasion to carry out the purpose we have long entertained of reprinting this study by the late Stuart Sherman. It was written as a review of Van Wyck Brooks's "The World of H. G. Wells" and appeared in the Nation of May 20, 1915. It was included in Sherman's book of 1917 "On Contemporary Literature", copyrighted by Henry Holt and Company, by arrangement with whom it is used here.*

IT IS a singularly incurious person who has never looked into the books of H. G. Wells; for through his innumerable pages swarm the figures, flash the colours, hum the voices of strictly contemporary life. Though he is on the brink of fifty, he remains the copious and incessant spokesman for the Younger Generation which he has stung into consciousness of itself. He helps us also to understand the stupidity of our fathers and the absurdity of our mothers. When Ann Veronica, in the novel bearing her name, announces her intention of attending an unchaperoned dance in London and spending the remnant of the night in a hotel, her aunt packs an entire "system of ideas" into the little apprehensive phrase, "But, my dear!" If you feel that the exclamation is delightfully ridiculous, you may consider yourself of the Younger Generation. If you elevate pained eyebrows with the aunt, you must set yourself down as Victorian.

When the Queen's great reign closed with her death in 1901, Mr. Wells did not go so far as to insist that the bones of her statesmen should be hung in chains and the ashes of her men of letters scattered to the winds. But he recognized, as did the court poets at the Restoration, that the readiest way to brighten a new epoch is to blacken its predecessor; violating the Victorians was an expedient justified, to adapt a military expression, by literary necessity. Accordingly he has put into circulation the popular epithets for the politics, religion, art, and morals which prevailed in the "dingy, furtive, canting, humbugging, English world" of our fathers, with its "muddled system", its "emasculated orthodoxy", its "shabby subservience", its "unreasonable prohibitions", its "meek surrender of mind and body to the dictation of pedants and old women and fools". At the same time he has been giving currency to the catchwords of the new era: "scientific method", "research", "efficiency", "coöperation", "publicity", "constructive statesmanship", "socialism", "eugenics", "feminism", "aviation". When we open his works of fiction, we find the Victorian muddler, the prig, the standpatter, and the prude making way for the clear-eyed theorist with the "white passion of statecraft", the titled lady with a penchant for breaking plate glass, the iconoclastic journalist in greenish-gray tweeds and art-brown tie, the independent young schoolgirl who dares to say "damn". And we are feelingly persuaded that we are moving, or that the world has rolled on and left us behind.

A writer so full of tendency as Mr. Wells,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

constantly setting father against son and son against father, is obviously something more or less than a novelist, quite irrespective of his sociological treatises. In the state of literary manners existing under George V, it is a bit difficult, however, to determine whether a man of letters who comes forward with a new order of ideas is a humbug or a philosopher. While I was pondering this delicate essential question in the case of Mr. Wells, there came into my hands a study of the man and his works by a critic of the younger generation, Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, which helped me out of an embarrassing situation. "Grotesque and violent as it may at first appear," says Mr. Brooks, "I believe that in the future Wells will be thought of as having played toward his own epoch a part very similar to that played by Matthew Arnold."

I was glad to be assured that Mr. Wells's air of passionate earnestness and transparent candour was not merely an aspect of his literary technique. And I seized eagerly upon the suggested parallelism; for, as I said to myself, if Wells is the Arnold of our time, by instituting a series of comparisons between the two men we may measure the "march of mind" in the post-Victorian period, and demonstrate the superiority of the ideas open to our young people over those set before their elders. But as I glanced down the page, I perceived that the likeness of Arnold and Wells was not limited to their general function in bringing home to the English mind "a range of ideas not traditional in it". That likeness extends, it seems, to "their specific attitudes toward most of the branches of thought and action they have concerned themselves with. Wells on Education, on Criticism, on Politics, and the nostrums of Liberalism; Wells, even on Religion, continues the propaganda of Arnold. Everywhere in these so superficially dissimilar writings is exhibited the same fine dissatisfaction, the same faith in ideas and standards, the same dislike of heated bungling, wilfulness, and confusion; even the same predominant contempt for most things that are, the same careful vagueness of ideal".

Though I share the critic's desire to relate Mr. Wells in some way to his predecessors, I was reluctant to acquiesce in the implications of this series of comparisons. For one point I supposed was entirely certain—that Wells repudiated the Victorians; and here was Mr. Brooks making him out the spiritual son and heir of one of their leading representatives. With a little effort, I believed, a spiritual ancestor with a more appealing likeness to his descendant could have been discovered outside the age of compromise and muddle. Arnold, as I thought, was disqualified for the relationship by characteristics which he shared with most of the reforming novelists of his sluggish period. I refer to their habit of dealing, "confusedly", no doubt, with realities, and to the modesty of their enterprises. Dickens, Kingsley, Reade, Mrs. Stowe, and the rest—they did not seek to make the world over, but only to accomplish a few simple things like abolishing slavery, sweat-shops, Corn Laws, the School of Squeers, imprisonment for debt, the red tape of legal procedure, the belief in pestilence and typhoid as visitations of God—and all that sort of piddling amelioration.

What Wells required in the way of an ancestor was a man with a large free gesture, like Godwin or Rousseau, sweeping away the Daedalian labyrinth of existing society, and with a few bold strokes chalking out a new social order. Shelley might serve; he was like Wells in striving "to bring home to the English mind a range of ideas not traditional in it"; and he showed other points of similarity. In both Shelley and Wells we find the same

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fierce railing at conventional and customary things, the same eager projecting and reforming temper, the same childlike faith in the possibility of refashioning human nature, the same absorbed interest in sex, and the same abandonment of an eagerly pursued science for the sake of writing romances.

Though in these general respects Shelley was like Wells, Shelley was not in the least like Arnold, who, as will be remembered, dismissed him as a beautiful but ineffectual angel. I was thus driven to conclude that the really decisive likeness which Mr. Brooks saw between Wells and Arnold was not in their general function and temper, but in "their specific attitudes toward most of the branches of thought and action they have concerned themselves with". Yet having by this time conceived a partiality for my own literary parallel, I ran it out alongside that of Mr. Brooks, while I was examining his contention that the prophet of the Younger Generation has continued the propaganda of the "elegant Jeremiah" of the Victorians.

Wells, we are told, continues the propaganda of Arnold with regard to education. The error involved here could have been made only in an age more concerned about its educational machinery than about its educational product. It is perfectly true that both Wells and Arnold wish the state to organize and standardize instruction. The vital question, however, is whether they agree upon what the state schools are to teach, and upon what is the "objective" of teaching.

It will hardly be disputed that if educators have anything in common it is the desire of each to reproduce his own educational species. Wells was trained at the Royal College of Science in physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, and botany; Arnold was trained at the University of Oxford in the traditional classical disciplines. Wells belongs indubitably to the scientific species of educator, distinguished by its devotion to original research and by its steadfast belief that the crown of human endeavour is an extension of the boundaries of knowledge. Arnold belongs indubitably to the humanistic species of educator, distinguished by the importance it attaches to the assimilation of classical experience in the attainment of its highest end, the perfection of the individual character.

When Wells outlines a model course for the schools of the future, he discards Greek and Latin, and prescribes as the "backbone" of a sound curriculum as much mathematics as possible, English, and the natural sciences. When Arnold, after thirty years' experience as inspector of schools, delivers in America the essence of his educational ideas, he tells us that for most men a little mathematics suffices; that Greek will be "increasingly studied as men increasingly feel the need in them for beauty and how powerfully Greek art and literature can serve this need"; and that if there is to be a separation and option between humane letters and natural sciences, the majority of men would do well "to choose to be educated in humane letters rather than in the natural sciences". For, argues Arnold, humane letters help a man's soul to get soberness, righteousness, and wisdom; while in the sphere of conduct, which is three-fourths of life, the natural sciences are comparatively impotent, leaving the moral nature undisciplined and inclined to caprice and eccentricity. Arnold maliciously cites the case of Faraday, that eminent man of science, who was a Sandemanian; one thinks also of Shelley, who emerged from his passionate study of chemistry at Oxford, declaring that the happiness of the human race depends upon the adoption of a vegetable diet; and one remembers the many heroes and heroines of Wells who have been bred on the natural

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sciences, and how they applied their zoological observations to the conduct of life. If, finally, we recall together the fact that Wells is a pupil and disciple of Huxley, and the fact that Arnold's *Science and Literature* is rather explicitly an attack upon the new educational programs inspired by Huxley, it should be clear that Wells came into the world to condemn the educational ideas of Arnold.

It is true that both Wells and Arnold insist upon the importance of fearless criticism—the free play of ideas upon all the subjects which concern us. But here again, before we agree that one continued the work of the other, it is essential to know the standpoint adopted, the method pursued, and the object contemplated by each.

At the risk of verbal absurdity one is obliged to say that Wells as critic takes his stand with the future behind him; that he retreats into the future for light on the problems of the present; and that the object of his criticism is to enable us to see things as in themselves they really are not. And, to continue the Hibernian contrast, Arnold takes his stand with the past behind him; he turns to history for light on the questions of the day; and his object, as he never tires in repeating, is to enable us to see things as in themselves they really are.

This wide difference in critical object, method, and standpoint arises from the fundamental opposition between, let us say, the pseudo-scientific and the humanistic outlook upon life. Wells, whose philosophy took shape in the biological laboratory as under the microscope the bounds which seemed to hold individuals in fixed species disappeared and everything merged in everything else by an infinite scale of infinitesimal differences —Wells is profoundly impressed by the *uniqueness* of every atom in the universe, and hence by the impossibility of formulating any law valid for any two atoms. Arnold, whose philosophy took shape as he studied the moral rather than the physical history of man, is profoundly impressed by the *identity* of human passions and human needs in Palestine, Greece, and England; and hence by the possibility of discovering law valid for civilized men everywhere and at all times.

We have here an explanation of the curious fact that the critic of scientific training abandons the "scientific method" and proceeds from the unknown to the known, while the critic trained in humane letters adopts the "scientific method" and proceeds from the known to the unknown. I mean that Wells, in his scepticism of the categories established by the intellect, throws reason overboard, and commits the steerage of his course to a self-willed, egoistic, anarchical imagination. "I make my beliefs", he says, "as I want them. I do not attempt to go to fact for them. I make them thus and not thus exactly as an artist makes a picture so and not so." For Arnold, who retains his faith in the intellect, truth is not something to be created, but something to be ascertained. Between the two critics yawns this gulf: Wells seeks to make whim and the will of Wells prevail, while Arnold seeks to make "right reason and the will of God" prevail.

This distinction holds between the political fantasies of Wells as set forth in his various Utopian essays, and the political and social criticisms of Arnold as set forth in his essays on Democracy, Equality, British Liberalism, and Culture and Anarchy. In the one case, a lyrical voice cries, like the Persian poet, "Come, let us drink wine, and crown our heads with roses, and break up the tedious roof of heaven into new forms". In the other case, a sober, persistent Englishman says,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Let us try to look at this nineteenth century of ours steadily and determine what can be done; let us straighten a little here, and level a little there, and elevate a little everywhere".

A specious likeness is perhaps observable in the fact that both Wells and Arnold advocate extending the powers of the state. The likeness itself becomes a difference the moment one reflects that Arnold recommended an increase of governmental action in a time of *laissez-faire* Liberalism and radical Individualism, and that Wells advocates an increase of governmental action in a time when an English statesman is telling us that "we are all Socialists nowadays". It is not the function of a political critic, as Arnold reminds us, to carry coals to Newcastle.

The difference widens as soon as one considers the uses to which Wells and Arnold propose to put the enlarged powers of the state. Wells, having the courage of his sanguine imagination, desires to make the state a magnificent reservoir of science and energy and capital, "which will descend like water that the sun has sucked out of the sea", which will do away with the necessity of poverty and labour and pain, and which will abolish "the last base reason for anyone's servitude or inferiority". Arnold, who prefers to retain some contact with the realities of life, phlegmatically lays down a very simple principle defining the limits of state action: "To use the state is simply to use coöperation of a superior kind. All you have to ask yourselves is whether the object for which it is proposed to use this coöperation is a rational and useful one, and one likely to be best reached in this manner. Professor Fawcett says that Socialism's first lesson is that the working man can acquire capital without saving, through having capital supplied to him by the state, which is to serve as a fountain of wealth perennially flowing without human effort. Well, to desire to use the state for that object is irrational, vain, and mischievous. Why? Because the object is irrational and impossible".

What more need be said of the New Republic and other ships of state which Wells, like Shelley launching his paper boats on the pond in Kensington Gardens, lets drift down the stream of time? What more need be said but that Wells himself, like Shelley in his later years, has begun to despair of transforming the world by state intervention, and is transferring his faith to the redemptive power of the "beautiful moral idealisms" embodied in his own novels!

Nowhere, however, does the irreconcilable opposition of Wells and Arnold appear more distinctly than in their respective attitudes toward morality, and in particular toward "sexual morality". In the latter field, the Bosnia of the moral world, Wells has been an incessant dropper of bombs. Arnold, in general, maintained the despised Victorian "reticence". One recalls, nevertheless, significant passages in his letters expressing apprehensions for the future of France on the score of the "social evil". And one recalls his equally significant declaration that Dowden's *Shelley* makes one feel "sickened forever of the subject of irregular relations".

To this humanistic moralist of the Victorians morality seems a settled and simple matter. He holds that in the course of some thousands of years of civilized society the elementary principles of conduct have been adequately tested, and are now to be unequivocally accepted. They constitute a standard of "right reason" outside themselves, to which we should vigorously subject our treacherous individual sensibilities. By adopting these principles the individual acquires a character, becomes a member of civil society, and per-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forms the first duty of man, which is to perpetuate in and through himself the moral life of the race.

The zoological moralist of the Younger Generation holds that morality is a new, complex, experimental science with its work all before it and only a vague generalization fresh from Mr. Wells's laboratory to guide it. In order to get society upon a sound moral basis, says Mr. Wells, it is essential "to reject and set aside all abstract, refined, and intellectualized ideas as starting propositions, such ideas as right, liberty, happiness, duty, or beauty, and *to hold fast to the fundamental assertion of life as a tissue and succession of births*". How Sairey Gamp would have enjoyed that "tissue and succession of births"! Upon this striking obstetrical truth Mr. Wells proposes to hang Moses and all the prophets. Then he will erect upon it the new morality.

Since life is fundamentally a tissue and succession of births, it appears to follow that the first duty of man is to perpetuate not the moral but the physical life of the race. Since "we don't know what to breed for", orthodox eugenics is all astray. Since scientific man-breeding, or zoological ethics, is still in its infancy, it behooves us to encourage all sorts of experimentation in procreation, cohabitation, the rehabilitation of natural children, the state subsidization of mothers, and perhaps also of lovers. In the new society, instead of the Victorian convention which precluded the married man from investigation in this field, we shall have freedom for various sex-associations, and, consequently, for enriching emotional discoveries in what are now the dull years of domestic fidelity and emotional hebetude. Mr. Wells is rather fond of turning the tables upon the naughty dramatists of the Restoration, who, as every one knows, exalted the bachelor at the expense of the married man. In *Ann Veronica,* for example, and *The New Machiavelli*, it is the bachelor who is the cad and the *cornuto*; it is the married man who knows how to strike the emotional diapason.

It may be objected that it is idle to promise a future in which a man may love any woman he pleases, since all history teaches that a man has his life-work cut out for him if he pleases any woman he loves. Mr. Wells does not care what history teaches. It may be pointed out that experimentation in irregular relations is not a novelty; that it is now, and always has been, widely practised; and that the experience of mankind has generally proved it disastrous. Mr. Wells does not care what the experience of mankind has proved. If you assure him that it is not a question of social "systems", but of human nature, if you insist that irregular relations under any system quite regularly beget that "vehement flame" of jealousy which the wise man of Israel says is "cruel as the grave", you do not abate his enthusiasm one jot. He is a man of imagination. He makes his beliefs as he wants them. If they clash with immutable things in this world, he creates another world. He has heard of jealousy; but he intends to abolish it. He intends to create a new society in which one can make love to another man's wife without exciting the jealousy of her husband. This is the inspiriting message of *The Passionate Friends*, which closes with these words: "I will not be content with that compromise of jealousies which is the established life of humanity today. I give myself—to the destruction of jealousy and of the forms and shelters and instruments of jealousy, both in my own self and in the thought and laws and usage of the world".

Precisely Shelley's idea when he magnanimously invited his wife to join him and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mary Godwin in Switzerland. And she, poor wretch, dumbly criticized his idea from the bottom of the Serpentine.

The defect in Wells's religion which distinguishes it from the religion of Arnold is exactly the defect in his morality, namely, the lack of any principle of control. Here again, he cries, we are in a field for free experimentation; nothing has been determined; "religion and philosophy have been impudent and quackish—quackish!" And so, while for Arnold religion is something which binds and limits, religion for Wells is something which looses and liberates. Arnold rejects dogmatic theology, but he writes three books to justify the Hebraic faith in an Eternal, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness, and to extol the "method" and the "sweet reasonableness" of Jesus. Wells rejects dogmatic theology and all our inheritance from the Hebrews—except their turn for business organization; his substitute for "morality touched with emotion" is a hot fit of enthusiasm for social progress excited by fixed meditation upon the Utopian projections of his own fancy.

For Arnold, the men of true religious insight are Jesus, Marcus Aurelius, St. Francis, the author of the *Imitation*, Spinoza, who all consent together that "the Kingdom of God is within you". Wells designates this conception in the case of Marcus Aurelius as "a desire for perfected inconsequent egoism". There is something to be said for a religion which produces a perfected egoism like that of Aurelius. But Wells, in the temper of Shelley and other social revolutionists, insists that "salvation's a *collective* thing", to be accomplished somewhere in the social environment, beyond the borders of the individual soul. The logical product of the sentimental altruism of Wells may be seen in the hero of almost any of his later novels—in the hero, for example, of *Tono-Bungay*, whom his creator quite accurately characterizes as a "spiritual guttersnipe in love with unimaginable goddesses".

With all its fervour for perfecting mankind in the mass, the religion of Wells somehow fails to meet the needs of the individual man. It helps everyone but its possessor. He has struggled with this problem, but he has not brought to his task the resources of the religious sages; he has approached it with only the resources of the scientific perfectibilians. He has felt, as we all have felt, the dumb and nameless pain which throbs at the heart of our being as we march or mince or creep or crowd through the welter of cross-purposes, wars, poverty, dreadful accidents, disease, and death, which we call our life. If you ask him how to assuage that pain, he answers that we must apply scientific methods to make mankind pacific, intelligent, well, and wealthy. If you ask him why his hero, Trafford, in *Marriage*, who is already wealthy, well, intelligent, and pacific, still feels the throbbing pain, he replies, "That is because Trafford has a developed social consciousness, and cannot enter into felicity until there is a like felicity for all men to enter".

Now, did Mr. Wells possess not the insight of the religious sages, but just the sober human experience of a pagan like Horace, he would know that though all men entered his earthly paradise of lacquered ceilings, white-tiled bath rooms, Turkey rugs, scientific kitchens, motor-boats, limousines, and victrolas, still in their poor worm-infested breasts would dwell "black care", still would they remain spiritual guttersnipes in their scientific Elysium. And if Mr. Wells consulted Arnold or the spiritual physicians who have effectually prescribed for the essential malady of living, he would be told that inner serenity springs from self-collection, self-con-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trol, and, above all, from the Hebraic sense of personal righteousness, which is the beginning of religious wisdom.

Here and there through the works of Wells there is a glint of scepticism, a flash of self-mockery, which makes one wonder to what extent he himself feels the confidence of the young people who look to him as their saviour. But I have deliberately renounced inquiry into the essential sincerity of his radicalism. I have presented him in the rôle that captivates his admirers, not as an empty resonator for a bewildered and discontented multitude, but as a glowing, eloquent, sanguine leader of the generation which is pressing for a place in the sun. I have exhibited him rising in adorable, unworldly innocence to arraign a social system under which two and two make only four, and water refuses to run up hill, and a child cannot eat his cake and keep it, and fire will not refrain from burning, nor the lion and the lamb lie quietly together, nor sober people take seriously his fairy tales of science, sex, and sociology. If my analysis is correct, I have detached him from Arnold, and established his connection with Shelley. This service should be grateful to him and to his followers; for I have denied him the rank of a Victorian critic only that I might elevate him to the rank of a Georgian angel.

JOSEPH

FROM "EMINENT EGYPTIANS" *by* L–TT–N STR–CH–Y

by Hugh Kingsmill

With our present information, it would be injudicious to assert that the popular account of the meeting between Joseph and his brothers conforms rather too closely to the exigencies of poetic justice to be accepted as a reliable report of what did, indeed, actually happen. But need we accept this account without any reservations? Are we not entitled, are we not, perhaps, even compelled, to ask whether the stupendous, the incredible, moment when the First Minister of Egypt declared himself to his shepherd brothers was really led up to with as little management as is usually supposed? Must we indeed believe that, had as much been left to chance as the story in its present form implies, the situation would have worked itself out quite so smoothly, quite so completely, quite so in accordance with the—may one say?—theatrical fitness of things? Where it is injudicious to assert, it is still permissible to suggest: and the following considerations may, possibly, be of interest to those minds which find a rarer satisfaction in tracing the ambiguous convolutions of reality than in reposing on the comfortable simplifications of romance.

If we take the trouble to examine our general impression of Joseph's character, we shall make a rather startling discovery. The ex-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

convict, the member of an outcast desert tribe, whose infinitely patient, and infinitely discreet, manipulation of men and circumstances elevated him to the position of virtual ruler over the proudest and most powerful of states, is entirely overshadowed in our imagination by the naïve boy of seventeen. Do we, when we think of Joseph, see the subtle autocrat with drooping eyelids and immobile face, moving in unheeding majesty down the long lane of beseeching suppliants? Or, do we not rather see a foolish, charming boy, parading before his envious brothers an ill-fitting particoloured jacket, stitched by a doting father with a hand that trembled in the last agitations of affection and the first approaches of senility? Do we not see a flushed excited face, gazing in bewilderment at the bitter and menacing expressions evoked by those two dreams which foretold, with an absolute exactness, the incredible elevation of the dreamer and the utter prostration of his listeners? And, in the contemplation of these visions, are we not apt to forget that, between this youth and the master of a great empire, a single incident had placed an impassable barrier: the incident of the well? For the Joseph whom his exacerbated brothers lowered into the well was, in very truth, an entirely different person, in everything but the indestructible substratum of character, from the Joseph whom, at Judah's suggestion, they pulled out again.

What had happened? What influence was it, or what revelation, which had worked, in a moment, as it were, so drastic, so far-reaching, so durable a change? We all know where truth is hidden. Was it truth, then, which Joseph found at the bottom of the well? Well, perhaps hardly that. Truth is not a commodity which a politician—even in his most embryonic stage—would be likely to recognize, if he happened to stumble on it. No, it was not Truth which Joseph found, it was something else; something less recondite, something far more useful: it was Tact.

When Joseph emerged from the well, he was no less conscious of his superior abilities than when he descended into it. But he had divested himself, very completely, of all immediate desire to proclaim them. That the sun and the moon and the stars would, one day, make obeisance to him, of that he was still assured. That his sheaf would stand upright, while the sheaves of his brothers bowed before it—oh! that was no mere dream. That was God's promise. That, in the fulness of time, would be his revenge. But before others would bow to him,—how clearly he now saw it!—he must first bow to others. Before he could straighten his back, he must learn to curve it. Before he could place his foot on the neck of his enemies, he must stretch his own neck, adroitly, assiduously, complacently, beneath the foot of the knave, the fool, and the oppressor.

A lesson, speedily learned, is apt to be forgotten with equal speed. But it was not so with Joseph. One error in judgment, one misapplication of his suddenly acquired wisdom, is indeed to be noted against him: but only one. Failing, in his youthful inexperience, to take into account the most disturbing, the most subversive, of all forces, Joseph employed with Lady Potiphar the same supple tact, the same quick adaptation of his mood to the mood of a superior, the same eager submissiveness, the same unwearied smiling zeal, which had won her husband. The lady —one can hardly blame her—misunderstood Joseph. Joseph—no doubt one should applaud him—refused to understand the lady. The sequel is well known. In a terrible scene, a scene of passionate entreaty and searing contempt, of tears dried by wild laughter, and laughter shrilling into screams, Joseph learnt

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his second lesson. What that lesson was, it is easy to infer from his subsequent career. The pursuit of power has frequently been found to be quite compatible with an occasional divagation into the region of sentiment. But the history of Joseph is entirely innocent of the kind of episode which is wont to diversify, not unagreeably, the arid records of political ambition. He did, indeed, marry; but there are several varieties of marriage. There is the marriage of impulse and passion: there is also the marriage of calculation and self-interest. And one may, perhaps, be excused from placing in the former category the alliance which Joseph, shortly after emerging from prison, was so fortunate as to arrange between himself and the daughter of the most eminent ecclesiastic in the Egyptian hierarchy.

But—one hears the objection—how are Joseph's audacious incursions into the nebulous territory of dreams to be reconciled with the view of him as preternaturally prudent? Surely, it may be urged, a man of merely ordinary discretion would hesitate to stake his career on his ability to predict from the shifting and ambiguous symbolism of dreams the accidents of individual or national fortune. It is difficult not to agree. It is even more difficult to suppose that Joseph ever hazarded his destiny on the findings of a faculty which operated out of his control; in, as it were, a mystical vacuum. Persons engaged in the business of forecasting future events, palmists, casters of horoscopes, oneiromantists, are not—so at least one understands—averse from basing their predictions on the secure foundation of a detailed acquaintance with the careers and preoccupations of their clients. Sometimes, it is true, they are precluded by circumstances from acquainting themselves with the necessary particulars; and it has been noticed that on these occasions their powers of divination are seriously impaired. Joseph, however—it is one more indication of his predominant characteristic—never permitted himself to be involved in a predicament of this nature. It is abundantly obvious that, when the chief butler and the chief baker submitted to his consideration the doubtful imagery of their uneasy slumbers, Joseph had already formed, from the gossip of the prison, and the confidential relaxations of the prison's governor, a comprehensive view of the relation of each of these functionaries to his royal master. It was not their dreams which Joseph interpreted to these officials: it was the carefully-explored probabilities of their respective situations.

Nor, still more obviously, did Joseph arrive at the secret of Pharoah's uneasiness after an anxious comparison of the possible significances implicit in the fat kine and the lean kine, the good ears and the blasted ears, of that monarch's troubled repose. Joseph, when he was invited to elucidate the perplexities of the royal dreamer, had been twelve years in Egypt. A great deal can be learnt in twelve years, when the learner happens to be a man of insight and observation. It is, surely, paying Joseph a very poor compliment to suppose that he was not familiar, long before the royal summons, with the dominant anxiety of a ruler intelligent enough to foresee disaster, but insufficiently energetic to avert it. Or, are we really to believe that Joseph could assist himself only through the baffling medium of another man's dreams to the realization that the cycle of good and bad harvests would continue to repeat itself, as long as plenty produced the fatuous lethargy of repletion, and famine the empirical imbecilities of panic and despair?

If there is no compulsion on us to believe anything of the kind; if, on the contrary, every indication we possess suggests that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joseph's essays in divination furnish yet another proof of the care with which, in all his enterprises, he narrowed the element of chance to its irreducible minimum, we are left with a very curious problem on our hands. The culminating triumph of Joseph's life, the poignant, the ineffable, moment, which crowned his long patience, which healed his deepest wound—we all know what *that* was. Yet, if we are to accept the popular account, Joseph, with an inexplicable frivolity, committed to the agency of chance the indispensable preliminaries of his own vindication. The sedulous manipulator relaxed his hand at the supreme moment; the artist in adjustment failed to observe that there was anything which required to be adjusted. Had it not occurred to Jacob, already far advanced in his second century, to remind his sons that there was corn in Egypt, the reunion between Joseph and his brothers—we are asked to believe—would not have taken place. But that is not all. The draft on our credulity is not yet exhausted. We must also believe that it was at the instance of the timid and querulous patriarch himself, that his ten sons abandoned him with no other support and protection than the support and protection which the youthful Benjamin could afford. It may have been so, of course. Nothing, perhaps, is too improbable to happen. Yet why—the question imposes itself irresistibly—did he send *all* ten sons? Why did he not retain five, or four, or three? Why did he not retain even two? The answer—the only possible answer, surely—is that the ordering of the matter was in very different hands from Jacob's. Ten shepherds, occupants of a remote Canaan homestead—the master of Egypt spoke, and his confidential agent listened attentively—were to appear before him by a certain date. So much we may infer. The rest is in the region of speculation.

How was it managed? By what inducements were all ten brothers persuaded to leave their venerable and agitated parent? It was essential to Joseph's plan that there should be no premature revelation of the secret of his identity. And yet—can we not imagine him reflecting?—if one of his brothers were admitted into his confidence, how much more smoothly, how much more surely, would the enterprise work itself out to its predestined consummation! One of his brothers? But which one? Reuben? Reuben was an excellent fellow. Reuben had not been present when—the First Minister of Egypt frowned. Yes, Reuben had a good heart. What a pity he hadn't a head to match! Judah? Ah! that was another matter! Judah had brains. It was Judah's instinct for compromise which—the First Minister frowned again. Yes, he need not look beyond Judah. Judah would do what he was told to do; Judah would say what he was required to say; Judah would find the necessary arguments to persuade his brothers. Yes, Judah would do. He would do very nicely.

The First Minister smiled: and his confidential agent, who had been watching his face with discreet attention, leaned expectantly forward. . . .

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THOMAS BEER

by James W. Lane

THE work of Thomas Beer shines like patent leather. The artificial treatment and glaze appropriate to that product are characteristic of this little-talked-of author, whose unusual style, full of crisp, tart expressions and inversions and of drastic changes in scene, dialogue, and description, is highly self-conscious. Mr. Beer indeed is something of a rarity in America, outside of our most purple circles: a writer of elegance wasting himself, as must often appear, on inelegant though agile topics. Extended criticism has been wanting on this phenomenon, and few writers—Waldo Frank is an exception—have noted it publicly.

It would seem to the student of Beer's work as if this author had an overweening fear of being thought boring. Hence his curious, compact style, never flat, yet hardly ever easily read, with its inversions and its quick jumps in meaning. The characters also are subjected to the most rapid moves just as one is begining to focus upon them. The way, for example, in which Mark Walling in *The Fair Rewards*, as he is taking his leisure in England, is informed of his brother's death and then hustled back to America, is so sudden as to cause apoplexy to weak literary hearts.

This style falls in very well, too, with the cynical fragility of the dream-world which Mr. Beer has been predisposed to see in life:

> Oh, after dark Broadway was tolerable! Then the revolving people were shapes of no consequence and, with a little mist, these lights were aqueous, flotillas of shimmering points on a hovering, uncertain vastness. Now, the roadway was a dappled smear of bodies wheeled and bodies shod.

Or this, from *The Road to Heaven*, describing something intrinsically ugly in terms of transcendent or metaphorical beauty:

> Cars became beasts of warm metal nosing into a bright rank all across the street. A lot of tired people looked out of the cars at people tired on foot walking in front of the metal noses.

When to a spirit itself fatigued everything seems inconsequential and ultimately to perish, the first and easiest refuge of the faithless, next to throwing himself in the river, is glum, hard-boiled pessimism. The second step in painting the lily is sparkling cynicism, both of the present and of the past. That is Mr. Beer's way. Thus, one of the characters in *The Fair Rewards* says: "We had such a good time railing at the Victorians and repression. And now all the clever young things tell their emotions to cab drivers and invent emotions if they haven't any".

Mr. Beer is past master at reconstructing or at least re-vitalizing a period. That he does this with especially satiric intent is beside the point here. One can admit with Waldo Frank that he is a burner of the rotten vegetations of yesterday. But he is such a consummate master of detail—which each one of those three social studies, *Stephen Crane, The Mauve Decade*, and *Hanna*, attests—that the student feels that a great love was brought

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the task. Even *The Fair Rewards*, his first and best novel, published in 1922, and then *Sandoval*, released in 1924, show this sense of period. The one is redolent of the theatrical world in New York from 1895 to 1920, and the other, less authoritative, of the more exasperatingly parvenu New York society of the eighteen-seventies.

Not only these two novels but also the three social studies afford an unusual type of reading. Reading them is like going through the files of a newspaper of ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago. One is made to realize how quickly the United States changes, how impressionistic it is. In *The Fair Rewards*, genuine Broadwayese refers to an actor as a "step-dancer". In 1928, however, that term was already ancient, if not obsolete, and the correct term was "hoofer". In *Stephen Crane*, one meets "odd people", one sees (as in the *genre* paintings of George Luks and Jerome Myers) "in the riff-raff of cheap entertainers and idlers, those amazing types who are still so feebly represented in American fiction, the attendants in shooting galleries and carrousels, the mercenary pilgrims of a tiny circus that broke up at Asbury".

Then there is the other side of the picture at the end of the century. "Meanwhile, gold service flashed at dinners given to successive French painters who pronounced American women the loveliest of earth. In 1896 it was seen with delight that eighty ladies appeared crowned with jewels in the boxes of the Opera and in 1897 one of them offered to remit the rents of certain cottagers beside her park on Long Island if they would let her replace the tin of roofs with English thatch. But the American winds blew the thatch away. . . ." The importance of the trivial to animate a period was never better shown.

Stephen Crane, which was published in 1923 and sub-titled A Study in American Letters is, like *The Mauve Decade* and *Hanna*, more a study in sociology than in biography. It suffers, as most of Mr. Beer's writing suffers, from the knack or trick of trying to make each sentence memorable. It is undeniably literary and well written, but it lacks unity. Its author will go off and browse in a subject, like the mild reaction of the eighteen-nineties against American vitality, write a livid essay on this, and then attempt to take up where he had started on the subject of Stephen Crane. This proclivity is much more obvious and confusing in *Hanna*, where a dissertation on the psychology of President Grant (explained in terms of a war-time neurosis) interferes not a little with the progress of Mr. Hanna's life itself.

Stephen Crane is almost Mr. Beer's best book. It is too cruel to be quite the best. The hot blasts against Henry James are not encountered anywhere else. The paragraph beginning and ending with the words "He was so kind" is the incarnation of barbed sarcasm, and Crane himself is quoted similarly, writing that James was a pontificating old donkey received only by the third-rate hostesses of London.

Crane's life was cruel. He lived in "a realm of cheap lodging houses, cheap restaurants, and cheap journals"—the Bowery, one might say. Reginald Marsh's modern paintings and etchings portray capably the stark realism and brutality of the life that Crane knew, a life made more brutal and burlesque because of the deep sensitiveness it had to play on. And yet the man loved tang and colour and masculinity. His predilection, like the painter Homer's, was for red and for boats and the sea. He wrote his greatest story, *The Open Boat*, when adrift on the Atlantic and in danger of his life. He "knew" the things he wrote.

Such was the kind of man about whom

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Beer has written. It gives him the chance to slug at the genteel American critics of the eighteen-nineties, the magazine editors and the novelists who, if scratched, would reveal "a Yankee school-marm". Stephen Crane was undoubtedly a queer dick, but his emphasis upon a shattering individualism, a literary iconoclasm, was just what attracted Beer. For Beer longs to destroy the past with his own slink. He loves, as he says of Crane, to let his opinions squirt out in shocking jets on conservatives. He appreciates Crane's "vision of the world as a rudderless ship, 'going ridiculous voyages, making quaint progress, turning as with serious purpose before stupid winds' ".

The meaningless meaning that Crane saw in everything, his "grim flippancy", his phrase "incomprehensible death", appealed mightily to Thomas Beer. In fact, Mr. Beer has made the meaningless meaning of life his stock in trade. Such a philosophy caters to his kaleidoscopic view of the world, existence as seen by the down-and-outers who live on a shoestring or by the flashy *flâneurs* who live on scandal and mockery. For these two species compose a goodly part of Mr. Beer's characters, and he has seen to it that their philosophic norm should be fatalism.

Fatalism explains why Mr. Beer cannot brook placing his attention for long on one subject. Because he is unequal to long concentration, and sometimes even to logical connection, the reader must concentrate the more. Only so will the humorous inconsequence of dialogue—as between people who have just taken a strong cocktail—be understood. The reader will then understand that this desire of Mr. Beer to glorify the passing moment descends from his more fundamental desire to obliterate the passing of time. His love of the "sensational immediacy" of the philosopher is thus not unlike Hemingway's.

Now there is a very spiritual significance in living in the present in that it prescinds many of the worries and ills of the future, and gives a charming lightness of touch. The touch, or touchstone, however, is whether the lightness is moral or the opposite. Both Beer's and Hemingway's are amoral and immoral. In another sense, too, Hemingway and Beer, though poles apart in style, are kin. Neither can force his own background and education entirely out of the picture. Laurence Stallings instanced recently that in *A Farewell to Arms* Hemingway's own culture kept intruding where, from the dull point of view of the hero, it should not have been allowed to enter—that is, in the scene in which the hero pays a visit to one of the Italian cathedrals and begins ruminating, as perhaps not even all art critics would, on different phases of the style. Quite similarly, Beer makes Mark Walling in *The Fair Rewards* and Lamon Coe in *The Road to Heaven*, both originally farmers' boys and one also a sports-store manager, pugilist, and truck-driver, very good intellectuals—Walling daft over archaeology and colour effects, Lamon over drawing. I don't mean to say that this isn't all to the mustard. We have a number of mute inglorious Tunneys in America. I once rescued from manual labour an Irishman whose calligraphy would have graced a modern Book of Kells, who within a month had a short story accepted for one hundred dollars, and shortly thereafter was editing a paper with me, on which he was the columnist as well!

But whether or not Hemingway and Beer ought to make dullards into prodigies overnight, the fact remains that each author tends to eulogize rough, brontosauric specimens. Beer, as an example, championed George Bellows, who was certainly worth championing, but who, like Stephen Crane, was an excel-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lent baseball player and loved nothing that was not hard, cruel, and masculine. Beer's foreword to *The Lithographs of George Bellows*, handsomely issued by Knopf in 1927, is ably appreciative of that untranquil, rudely American draughtsman, another iconoclast. The preface is sprinkled with the use of "By God!" and "My God!", which the reader feels have been inserted by Mr. Beer either to characterize or to enliven the text, and not because the speaker to whom it is attributed actually swore. Such facile blasphemies, employed also in *The Road to Heaven*, do not whet one's intelligence.

The Mauve Decade of 1926 is Beer's best book. It is facetious and sparkling, without being irritatingly amoral. It abounds in deft caricature of Louisa May Alcott, the Trilby craze, Jay Hambidge, Robert Louis Stevenson, Irish-American politicians and other then famous personages. It does not possess much cohesion, but few of Mr Beer's things do. It concentrates, above all, in that decade—the eighteen-nineties—which is his favourite in that favourite period of his, 1870-1905. All of his books, with the exception of *The Road to Heaven* and part of *The Fair Rewards*, have dealt with this period, which is as idiosyncratic to him as are his use of the adverb "conveniently" and his always obvious admiration for William Graham Sumner, the Yale anthropologist.

That picturesque first sentence of *The Mauve Decade* "They laid Jesse James in his grave and Dante Gabriel Rossetti died immediately"—which explains so much of Beer, his irony, his incohesiveness, the tart yet purple music of his prose, haunts one's memory. For in *The Mauve Decade* the reader sees that the ogling fun which Mr. Beer pokes at the dead past almost reanimates it. Mr. Beer sees the past as ugly and chaotic, but since he has digested and even loved what happened in it, he describes the chaos only beautifully. In *The Mauve Decade* he characterizes Henry Adams as "one (who) observed the ugliness of chaos—chaos is always ugly to a moralist who demands rules, answers, codes, and restrictions for his personal comfort". Mr. Beer's perpetual purpose, on the contrary, has been to see, if possible, the beauty of chaos. All his words and ideas tend that way. The description of the tomb of Leland Stanford illustrates this snappy flippancy. And then "beyond this silent corner of the park, lads with hair bleached by perpetual sunshine swirl in fast motors and profanely flaunt jerseys of cardinal red, as though death and judgment did not matter much".

Perhaps a studious and philosophically-minded young man with a talent for expression was impressed by the frequent visits of significant people to his father's house in Ohio. The people were mostly high politicians, and such a background of cigar-smoke, high-ball fumes, business and political deals, and revealingly personal small talk soon impregnated Thomas Beer with a sense of a heritage which should be turned to literary and historical account. The inception of the idea to write up Hanna, the most personal and intimate of these political visitors, followed.

Hanna was published in 1929. It is the soundest and the best documented of the Beer books. And yet, broadly speaking, *Hanna* is not a biography at all, but just a lot of newspaper facts and family correspondence written up by the grace of an essayist instead of by the aplomb of a reporter. Inconsequential and diffuse for about one half its length, it finally booms up in its last two and a half chapters as a tremendous biography, dramatic, inspiring.

The picturesque style is relaxed a bit in *Hanna*. Compare the conclusion of this book

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the end of *The Mauve Decade*. While there is the difference in style called for by the difference between treating a death and treating a scene from a parade of delirious joy, the sentences as well as the emotions have grown simpler. How simple, and how forceful, is:

> "He has advertised McKinley", Theodore Roosevelt told my father, "as if he were a patent medicine!"
>
> This was Mr. Hanna's crime. He had openly made use of the full powers of propaganda. He had dealt with politics as if the birth of a company was being arranged. He had thrown a hundred thousand tons of advertising into the nation, against Mr. Bryan's voice, bad logic, and good intentions. He had won, but he had upset these men whose fortunes he had certainly saved from a renewed panic and the domination of inexpert governors. He had made a President and he had done it visibly. It is hard to forgive such realism.

And yet a certain mauveness of mind, a sophisticated modernism, hangs about Beer. The merciless detachment of Pirandello, without the logical *dénouements* of that literary mathematician, points up the purple of Thomas Beer's phrases into a sheen which is sometimes not far from gaudy. So, the pages of his books are strewn with stimulating ten-minute essays, related to each other at times only indirectly. This style shatters all the ardour of scorn, all the completeness of disillusion, qualities which are among Mr. Beer's fondest desires. Indeed there seems to be a sort of judgment afoot limiting him to the expression of minor grievances, minor funninesses, and minor conflicts. He finishes the preface to *Hanna* with—

> A politician's art is a long wrestling with the most dangerous of materials, ourselves. He lives as a demonstration of the one great modern saying: "It is life, not the individual, that is conscienceless". He puts out his will, not as he would but as he can, and his art is one of concessions, of oblique gestures, and perpetual ironics. Search for his conscience and you must pluck it from a hundred battered shards of distorting mirror.

Turning to the novels, one finds this sense of distortion very much more patent. Politicians and satiric essays on sociology lend themselves to this philosophic point of view. But life itself—the stuff of novels—can be distorted only with danger. Paul Morand and Maurice Dekobra achieve distortion, and Thomas Beer is their American likeness. Yet what he distorts most are death scenes. The appearance of death is a distorting occurrence. Minds become confused, nerves rasped, bodies taut. In *The Fair Rewards* the scenes at Mark Walling's house after Carlson dies and Margot returns from an unsavoury escapade are convincing and terrible. But in *The Road to Heaven* the scenes at Abner Coe's house after the deaths of Abner, Costello Ryan, and Frankie de Lima are the most lacerating of all in their unpleasantness.

The Road to Heaven is about pretty tough birds, even tougher than those in *The Fair Rewards*. Lamon Coe, like Walling in *The Fair Rewards*, brings the note of the young country bumpkin, uneducated but "wise" to the educated, into the yarn. His yawp is contrasted with the din of city life. In this book the soliloquies are shorter, but have the same intention as those in O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*. Chapter XV contains some excellent climactic writing, the most horrible and exciting Beer has yet done. Nevertheless, *The Road to Heaven*, which is more like a road to hell, "dates". That is to say, although it is a good chronicle, it chronicles only the enormities of living that we now think of as part of the years 1924-1928: the period of the bull market, of the gilded phantasmagoria that sex and crime and fast life made of society

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and metropolitan existence. But as we now see, and as Beer then implied, what they really made of it was a moonstruck nightmare. Thus, between 1922, the publication date of *The Fair Rewards*, and 1928, that of *The Road to Heaven*, society changed for the racier.

To be frivolously and fatalistically unpleasant is one of Mr. Beer's strongest literary leanings. Not a character of his but is to some extent an intellectual suicide, blaspheming here, getting drunk for a week there (when a baby is born), and altogether quite pretentiously bored with life when not riding the crest of its wave. No wonder then that these characters have to be recruited from a certain section. You have seen in summer men dressed in white with orange cravats riding around in glittering cheap new cars with women dressed in red, hard-faced, drunk or perhaps only doped at times. From such a cast Mr. Beer seems to expect pearls of wisdom. The only pearls, however, fall from his pen—in conciseness and studied beauty.

While he reminds one of Stendhal occasionally in his power of describing much in little, he is more impressionistic, for the reason that he has to varnish his disagreeable things with memorable words. In a way, the most memorable and romantic passage in his books is that describing the lone musician who, arriving late at the Fifth Avenue party for which he had been hired and which has already broken up, is forced to play to a deserted dance-floor:

> But this music was not wasted in the empty room, because a light wind pelted the city and the curtains shook apart to let the sound of a violin become a whip in the air above the street. It was a lashing scream, aspiring to be heard. It wound its power around a fat old man upon an omnibus and he thought of supper in Vienna, of black caviar in grains on a frosty silver tray and of wine twinkling in a coloured glass under a lamp beside his mother's arm on a red table. This music swept across the street and was a rope that curled about the necks of two young lovers who had quarreled, so that their mouths drew together in a tremulous kiss.

This is fine writing with a vengeance, the essence of Beer, causing one to remember, in the case of *The Road to Heaven* (from which this passage comes), Saint-Victor's opinion of *Manon Lescaut*, that he wished one could remove the filthy spots from licentious books so that only the admirable pages would remain.

The impulse to be broad-minded, to which Beer succumbs with so many other modernist writers, covers the most chaotic confusion and despair of the intellect. All creeds are dissident under this impulse, and falsely appear to harmonize. It is an omnium gatherum of thought and personages. Broadmindedness of this type were better left to the graciously flippant French. Mr. Beer's butterflies have many Gallic qualities—they act according to the rhythm demanded by their natures, they are high-sounding, diabolic, and graceful. But they are always none-too-gracious figurines, and like the work of the author who created them, often for the *Saturday Evening Post*, interesting if not engrossing.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE OTHER SIDE OF AUTHORSHIP

by Osbert Burdett

In these days of the interview, the photograph, the broadcast, the lecture, and the appearance without the presence of an author by means of the talking film, to say nothing of the stream of confessions made by writers and of revelations published by their wives, it might seem that there is no other side of authorship unfamiliar to readers. Yet these things, depending as they do upon the mechanical multiplication of an audience and on an artificial extension of the senses of hearing and of sight, rather bring more people within range of an author than draw him any nearer to them. Interviews are not always reliable; the broadcast, at any rate in England, is usually a piece of writing communicated by word of mouth; photographs for publication are rarely so like as to be libellous; and the most indiscreet of revelations by a wife or by a secretary is affected by the law of libel or stage-managed by a desire for a financial scoop. All, no doubt, exploit the illusion of carrying the reader behind the scenes, but the very fact that thousands can be given this illusion, and that money is to be made if these thousands are beguiled, proves that nothing very intimate is really being offered. All these things, with few exceptions, are part of the stage business of "public life".

Of personal revelations we have plenty: too many for the average quality to be very good; but of professional experiences much less, though professional experiences, in any walk of life, are interesting. The travels of a butcher are not like those of other people. He goes to see the slaughter-houses and will complain (as a butcher did to me during a train-journey in Germany) if the process that he wants to study took place at too early an hour to be seen by a man accustomed to a different time-table in England. Munich, to this man, was famous only for its slaughter-house! An architect is exasperated by clients who, in spite of having lived in houses all their lives, have so little sense of planning and relation that they propose impossibilities to him and imagine that plans can be altered without extra cost when the walls are six feet above the ground. The doctor, the priest, the nurse, and the solicitor are supposed to hear very private matters, and odd things happen to all these people in the course of their work that do not happen to anyone else. It is the same, of course, with writers. The best known are everybody's prey, but the people who approach them in their professional capacity rarely pause to consider the problem, created by this approach, from the author's point of view. The consideration of these little problems and the adventures in which they sometimes end is the Other Side of Authorship. Here are a few that linger in my own memory.

To begin with the most frequent: the autographed book.

Our teeming modern populations necessarily create a market for art, and set up in this art-market, as in that of industry, an ideal of quantity: an ideal by which quality

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is always threatened. Thus, because one example of a book signed by an author as a private present to a friend may have the interest of a presentation or an "association" copy, and because this interest may extend, with little loss, to a limited number of specially bound and printed copies for general sale, at a higher price, the temptation to multiply these examples is pressed on popular authors, though the result of doing so must deprive such books of rarity and value. One very distinguished novelist has been persuaded to sign a thousand copies of a book; the edition must have sold, for the practice was repeated; but, if you had been this author, would you have agreed? For he happened to have made his reputation by taking so uncommercial a view of his work that, for instance, he was frequently in trouble for refusing to lower his artistic standards and, though not well off, thought nothing of spending upon the correction of his proofs as much as half the sum that he was being paid by his publishers. The autographed copy may be a delight to a reader. Let the reader consider the problem it often is to an author who does not want to cheapen himself.

The "association" copy can also be exploited, and surely no more pathetic story ever gave "association" to any set of books than this: It concerns a distinguished critic who outlived his generation. He found, as critics over forty are apt to find, that criticism is a poor provision for middle age. The critic fell ill; the sale of his books stopped; he began to repeat himself excessively; there was no welcome any longer for his articles. He became hard up, and so, some time before the war, he began stealthily to part with units from his library. The copies once given to him by admiring authors, many of whom had become famous, were the first to be sold. When these had gone, he was again in straits for money. With no more autographed copies left, with no more first editions of any value to part with, he looked desperately at the remainder of his books. Was there nothing he could do to increase their modest value? In the pinch of necessity he had an idea: to convert them himself into "association" copies. This he did, not by trying to copy the handwriting of their authors; he was far too honest a man; but by choosing those books about which he had written, and inscribing on their blank pages the most pithy of the sentences from his published criticisms. His idea presumably was that the bookseller to whom he or his confidential agent offered the book would be interested to see this autograph inscription by such a critic, and that, if the bookseller had the curiosity to refer to the published essay from which the autographed inscription had been taken, he might suppose the inscription to be the original germ of the essay, and the book to be the very copy that the critic had been studying—as, in fact, it probably was. Clearly, the edition of a Shakespeare play annotated, say, by Coleridge before he published his essay upon it would be hardly less interesting than the essay itself. Only think what Professor Lowes has done in his *The Road to Xanadu* by following up not dissimilar annotations! The same interest, in its degree, attaches to the annotations of good critics less famous than Coleridge. There was nothing dishonest in the plan, unless it was the suggestion of spontaneity. The autographed book was undoubtedly a genuine "association" copy, only the inscription was, but might not seem to be, an afterthought. For a while the plan had a modest success. The inscriptions gave to the books some added value, but, before very long, "annotated books from Mr. Blank's library" began to abound in the second-hand booksellers' catalogues; all were enriched by

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quotations from his published criticisms, and, in time, a book with an inscription in his handwriting was hardly worth a dollar the more. This is sad; for it meant that the surplus money which he deserved to have earned from his printed books he could not later attain even by manual labour. Collectors in search of some memorial of him, and one day yet there will be such, might do worse than amass these despised volumes. Gathered together they would make a monument—a pathetic monument to the hazardous rewards of authorship.

To younger authors the temptation comes in another guise, and American keenness of acquisition sometimes plays a part in it. For example, some years ago, a certain London bookseller, now dead—one of those who specialize in modern first editions—told me that in addition to his order from the publishers, he would undertake to sell twenty extra copies of a forthcoming book to America if the present writer would inscribe his signature in each. "Some of my best clients", the bookseller explained, "are American 'collectors', and that means people who will purchase only autographed copies from me." It was not suggested that the bookseller would receive more than the published price, nor that the consenting authors would be paid a fee. The point of the bargain was one-sided: that these "collectors", in fact, expected more for their money than ordinary purchasers of the book. What would you have done about that, now? For myself, the offer was refused, for it was felt to be an imposition, unfair to the ordinary purchaser and insulting to oneself. So few things are unique that it is attempted, no doubt, every day. The offer of a fee would not have made it more agreeable.

Such purely commercial little problems are relatively simple, for we have only to be guided by our (however inadequate) sense of honour. It is when sentiment enters that the trouble begins. What is an author to do with requests that reach him by post from professedly admiring strangers? It must be consoling to famous men, on whom the post deposits daily a pile of begging letters, to remember that there is no legal (or moral) obligation to reply to any correspondent. The "liberty" that they "take" so lightly by writing is the same "liberty" that the addressee has not to reply. The great Irish politician, Charles Stewart Parnell, was a notorious non-answerer of letters. He used to justify himself by this maxim: "Almost all letters, if left unanswered long enough, answer themselves". That is amusing just in so far as it is true. You cannot get round an observation so well founded! Few authors are so unapproachable, however; and correspondents in quest of a signature can make it more difficult for an approachable man (as they well know) if they accompany their request with a copy of his book. The lazy way is to sign it and say nothing, but this is not what an author may prefer. His conscience may smite him, and whisper: "You know that you would rather not; that it will look disagreeable to refuse, and that you are placed in an invidious position". The letter may suggest its sender to be not the kind of person you fancy should be encouraged, that he knows you would prefer not to tell him so. The weapon of such a person is moral intimidation in the guise of flattery, but authors are old in corruption and may need a spicier sauce than this. There is very little fun in crude flattery, but an unholy joy in an exquisitely subtle innuendo. To that point had I come when I was placed in the following dilemma.

The *Yellow Book* group of writers, as they are loosely called, are still collected by some people. Several books have been written about the eighteen-nineties, and in 1925 my own,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

called *The Beardsley Period*, appeared. Some time later a letter came from a man who forwarded a copy of the book, said that he had added it to his eighteen-ninety collection, and wanted it to be signed for various flattering reasons, of course. Having made a practice of signing only gifts to personal friends (and, later, a small limited edition of *The Very End and Other Stories*), what was to be done? On reflection, a letter was sent explaining that "association" copies had no "association" unless they were presents or limited to a small number of copies specially printed and bound, and the book returned unsigned to its inquiring owner. The explanation, so far as I can remember, ended with some such words as these: "Thus, to grant your request would be to connive at a practice that is making a farce of autographed copies. On consideration, I believe that you will see the force of this". Surely, it would have been altogether too solemn to underline, also, the fact that the gentleman had now, in place of an idle signature, a letter as well. The letter discussed a detail of literary ethics, which the fanatics who heed such trifles would be tickled to find, in the grangerizer's way, inserted in some book by the same penman. Human nature, however, does not reason logically—"when sentiment enters the trouble begins". Although the correspondent's statement that he wanted to place the work, once signed, among his "other treasures" etc., etc., etc., had been so phrased as to make one dubious—I have forgotten the exact turn that his extravagance took—this form of reply really exceeded his request; and he had no claim to a literal compliance. But still! one wondered. There was no time to toy with the reflection that too much may prove as teasing as too little, for, by return of post, the gentleman wrote again. While admitting the argument, he refused to admit that an exception should not have been made in his favour. However, he went on, it did not matter now, since the volume that had meant so much two days before was now a heap of ashes! His self-esteem, one supposes, had been pricked, but what an essay might be written on the touchiness of Readers!

Not long afterward, I ventured to ask a well-known poet what his practice was in this matter. He replied that he had never signed any but presentation copies or small limited editions of his books, except once. On this occasion, the poet was glancing over the shelves of a second-hand bookseller. In a few minutes the bookseller, recognizing him, advanced cautiously and said: "Sir, I have here a copy of one of your early works. If you will sign it, you will not be out of pocket, and I shall gain some shillings the more. Will you oblige me?" The poet paused. Then, with a smile, he asked for a pen. On the half-title of his early work he wrote:

To James Robinson whose privately printed verses have been the inspiration of my life, from his friend and admirer —— ——

The bookseller was enchanted; and so, no doubt, will be the ultimate owner of this book. Him, in his turn, we can picture haunting all the other second-hand bookshops in search of that very great rarity: James Robinson's secret poems. Unless by some incredible coincidence, the *bibelot* will not be easy to find, for the simple reason that this "James Robinson" was an invention. In years to come, no doubt, he will be conjecturally identified in several learned and conflicting volumes. It is easy to foresee the extent of the controversy that might arise. The precise extent will depend, of course, upon the posthumous renown of his inventor: the "onlie begetter" of a reputation to which this single reference only has survived. Someone will

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

probably argue that "James Robinson" had a passion for privacy, that, indeed, he printed but a single copy of his book, that even this he did not keep but gave—the entire offspring of his genius—to the friend of his life—our poet; and further, to recall the Pythoness in Coventry Patmore's famous ode—

For such strange fish I do foresee
When the charm'd fume comes strong on me—

the future investigator of this mystery will complete his theory thus:

"From all this [we can overhear him rising to the climax of his clues] it is scarcely conjectural to believe that the gift of this precious copy was accompanied by one condition: *viz.*, that the poet and sole peruser must never refer to the volume *in speech or in print.* This, and this alone, would explain why there is no other reference to Robinson anywhere in the poet's works. Yet, the influence upon him of James Robinson must have been profound, and indeed his sense of the never-to-be-admitted obligation overwhelming. At last, he had to find relief. Hence the inscription in his autograph, which, being *in his penmanship only*, was no infringement of the exacting conditions (almost certainly) laid down by Robinson himself."

Yes: "James Robinson" seems destined to provide a new literary mystery for the unliterary world, and the enigma of his identity and the fate of his lost verse will probably prove a godsend to candidates for literary degrees in search of a qualifying thesis. Is it not upon such controversies as these that "the Philistines of Gath go out against the Philistines of Gaza"?

Before we pass from autograph-hunting, on whose numerous ramifications much more could be said, what is an author to do should he venture on the platform and be personally pestered in the lecture-hall, where reader and author are confronted, face to face, with no escape? Such requests are the exception in England, but not, we are told, in the United States. The answer is simple. If you wish to evade such petitions, you can always stay at home. That, I seem to remember, was Mr. Hugh Walpole's solution. Its beautiful finality at any rate accords with good sense.

The little problems of life are endless, but there are professional little pleasures, sweet if rare. On the Other Side of Authorship miracles can happen. Here is a not unheard of one. Imagine a boy of seventeen with a boundless and angelic admiration for, say, Mr. Dreiser—but the author meant is the living author whom You yourself (at the age of seventeen) most admired. Suppose, further, that an Angel had told you then that your admiration would last your life, and that, at the end of twenty years, a piece of your own writing, with all the appropriate "I"s and "my"s, would be accepted by the great man and be thereupon published, without the alteration of a comma, over the great man's signature. You would not find that easy to credit, at the age of seventeen; and, if your admiration was intense at seventeen, you would perhaps day-dream excitedly about it. Suppose these twenty years to pass. . . . You are no longer, it is likely, visited by Angels. You have forgotten your familiar spirit, forgotten that angels prefer to return, if ever, unawares. Then, one day, having become a scribbler yourself, you are asked to supply a short preface for that very author, much your senior, who is ill. In commercial bookmaking the "literary ghost" is rampant, but not in the little corner where imaginative writing is still done. Yet, in circumstances easily imagined, this once incredible thing can happen, but once a miracle *has* happened it ceases to seem miraculous, and becomes, as all saints and all poets have testified, a commonplace, a matter of course. That is why,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

twenty years later, the excitement of seventeen may seem as remote as, twenty years earlier, seemed the possibility, the realization. Doubt and belief are no more than two ways of looking at life—for life miraculously goes on completely superior to you and me. Belief *is* sight, if "seeing is believing".

Sometimes the familiar spirit known to all authors—you will possibly not have forgotten a passing reference to a "dark fellow" by Mr. J. B. Priestley in THE BOOKMAN of April last—will not appear like an Angel, even a dark angel, at all. There is no end to the disguises of him. Sometimes he will be Puckish, and will treat one's pen, inkpot, lexicons and papers, not sparing even the very Ms. itself, as Puck treated "the wisest aunt" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Not always, however, will he torment one so invisibly. There are times when he prefers a literary (practical) joke. Then, taking the form of an Imp of Mischief and, with the aid of another author, preferably of an Irish author, he begins his malicious tricks. But here my own Imp, with an elfish grin, reminds me that I have reached the length of my tether, and the little affair with the late Frank Harris must wait till another time. . . .

The Other Side of Authorship is like a leafy spinney traversed by a funny old bridle-path or ancient packman's track, with endless tempting byways, no bigger than sheep-walks, with little dark topics to halt and to hide in, and, if the reader wishes, with abundant opportunities for pauses, and convenient spots for sitting down for further talk.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT

Humanism

It has been some months since we talked in this place of humanism, of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More. During that time it has become the custom of the critics and journalists to refer to humanism as a dead issue, and to More and Babbitt as dead men now once more restored to the tomb after a brief, unhappy exhumation. It seems a pity that the critics should put themselves in such an unfortunate light by patently judging events according to the newspaper noise they make. They forget that the main headway of the work of Babbitt and More in permeating the country and reaching numerous individuals was made during years when their names were never mentioned in print without a sneer. And they overlook the fact that the same process is going on now at a greatly accelerated pace.

As we contemplate the fatuous complacency with which the journalists imagine that their convictions and allegiances are securely entrenched, we are reminded of the story Al Jolson used to tell during the war, of a big buck Negro who spent all his spare time in the training camp sharpening an enormous razor. He carried the razor right up to the front-line trenches, each day bringing it to a finer edge. At length came his first charge over the top, and he advanced razor in hand, his gun trailing. A German came rushing at him with bayonet poised. The Negro took a terrific full-arm sweep at him with his razor and stepped aside. "Never touched me," jeered the German. The Negro grinned wide as he started away. "You jes' wait till you move yo' head," he said.

* * *

A number of books touching on the work of Babbitt and More have appeared since our last remarks, some of which we will have space to notice this month. The most substantial is Norman Foerster's *Towards Standards* (Farrar and Rinehart), a worthy sequel to his book of 1928, *American Criticism*, and to his brilliant work in assembling and launching the symposium *Humanism and America*, a book that has already taken its place as one of the crucial documents in American thought. In *Towards Standards* Professor Foerster deals for the first time at any length with contemporary writers, and shows the same penetration and large grasp, the same charm and lucidity of writing, the same gift for deft quotation, that characterized the series of historical studies in *American Criticism*; he also reveals an unsuspected talent for extremely effective irony.

The heart of the book is already familiar to many Bookman readers, the essays on impressionism, on the journalistic critics and the sociological critics having first been published in these pages. The little study of the warfare over impressionism from the French 1880's to the American 1920's seems to us a masterpiece of fair exposition and searching analysis. Stuart Sherman and Henry Canby are shrewdly examined in the chapter on the journalists, and finally the school of social prophecy is measured in the persons of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, and Lewis Mumford. It seems a great pity that Bourne and Brooks were not subjected to such masterly criticism while their books were appearing. But probably they would have been as impervious to Professor Foerster's temperate but acute and often devastating treatment as Lewis Mumford seems to be.

No better criticism than these three chapters has been written among us in many years. They make the book invaluable to those interested in understanding modern critical currents. To anyone who has not yet found a valid set of principles among the conflicting and confusing schools, the book is likely to prove a revelation, especially if he has not met the work of Babbitt or More at first hand. His direct exposition of the humanist stand Professor Foerster reserves for his last chapter. This is reprinted from the concluding chapter in his *American Criticism*, and is a stimulating introduction to many of the aspects of Irving Babbitt's work. The chapter had much effect in its first form, and will doubtless still prove effective. But we cannot help regretting that it was reprinted without revision. During its two years of rather constant publicity it was subjected to several severe examinations, not all of which left it unscathed. It would have benefited by revision in the light of the criticism of T. S. Eliot, Herbert Read, G. K. Chesterton, and even Allen Tate.

Towards Standards has an introductory chapter called *Humanism in the Renaissance*, and concerning this we cannot report very jubilantly. The best to be said for it is that it is a manful attempt at a task that seems to us both unnecessary and impossible: namely, to give historical justification for Babbitt's use of the word humanism by relating the new humanism to that of the Renaissance. This is not the occasion to treat the matter at length, but we can touch on it briefly. There are two different ways in which Babbitt connects his conception of humanism with the Renaissance. Part of the time he makes his parallel by pointing out that the earlier men were in effect combating one sort of excess (overemphasis on otherworldliness and asceticism), whereas the task of the new humanists is to combat the opposite excess (naturalism): the two movements are similar because they are opposing the particular imbalance of their respective ages—though indeed the maladies are the opposite of each other. Taken as a highly condensed summary, this is a vivid and useful formula. But when Babbitt carries the idea further and seeks to show that the Renaissance humanists were consciously actuated by the aims and standards he himself holds (and which we may remark in passing we share with him), he seems to us to go beyond the accepted historical accounts without presenting enough evidence to cause the history of the period to be revised.

It is to aid in filling this lacuna that Professor Foerster has written his study of Renaissance Humanism. He has probably done as well as the facts permit; but the total effect seems to us to be to make the impossibility of the task glaringly obvious. He bravely faces the awkward fact that the majority of the men usually called humanists were not men of measure, restraint, discipline and decorum, but instead men of exuberance and tumultuous, disorderly activity, possessed by a straining expansiveness and what Emerson called a canine appetite for knowledge. Professor Foerster's method of getting around this difficulty is at least sufficiently bold. He calmly states (pp. 21-22) that what the Italian humanists (to use the conven-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER
in the garden of her Vermont home.

tional term) from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century exemplified "was not humanism but naturism". In other words, the men for whom the word humanist was coined were not humanists!

This is but one-half of Professor Foerster's thesis, which is built around a sharp contrast between Italian Humanism and Transalpine Humanism. The Italians, as we have seen, he freely and gladly gives to the enemy: they were simply *not* humanists. The true humanists were the Transalpine breed. Of these Nordic humanists he singles out Erasmus as the most nearly perfect. Here, of course, he is on solid ground: Erasmus was undeniably a humanist, and at the same time a man who ranks high by Babbitt's standards. But it still remains for Professor Foerster to show that these standards are the only ones that should be called by the word humanism. After pointing out that Erasmus was not so excessively many-sided as some of those flashy, superficial, and often nasty Italians, he completes his argument in these words: "Having sharply marked limits in his interests, when compared with a man like Alberti before or Goethe after him, Erasmus would scarcely seem to rank high as a humanist; and yet he does, by common consent. From this fact one can only argue that universality, while a part of the humanist ideal, is subordinate to that other part which makes for control or discipline". This seems to us a resounding *non sequitur*.

We regret sounding so negative about Professor Foerster's admirable volume. And we regret even more making any addition to the purely verbal dispute over the word humanism which has bulked so large in the discus-

Correcting the proofs of "Basque People". An article on Mrs. Fisher's work appeared in the September BOOKMAN.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

King-Camera Guild

JAMES STEPHENS

photographed on the Berengaria as he sailed home after a short visit to this country. The Irish poet's new volume is entitled "Strict Joy".

sion of Babbitt and More. But we felt obliged to record our opinion that this trivial verbal matter will continue to confuse discourse and block more serious issues as long as the new humanists relate themselves to the humanists of the Renaissance without full emphasis on the elements of contrast.

* * *

The Dilemma of the Liberated

One of the dangers of likening the new humanists to their Renaissance namesakes can be seen in Gorham Munson's book *The Dilemma of the Liberated* (Coward-McCann). In his opening chapter Munson emphasizes the extreme variety of the Renaissance humanists, and later uses this as a way of suggesting that as the new humanists become worthy of their name they, too, will have an infinite variety, including "anarchic humanists" after the manner of Thoreau, "liberal humanists" after the manner of Herbert Croly in his last balmy Oragian period, and other kinds equally incompatible.

But this is only a minor aspect of Munson's valuable book, which was written to provide a general survey of the humanists and their position in American thought. Such a job is of course enormously difficult: accomplishing it speedily for an occasion was a veritable *tour de force*, and the book is packed with useful information and interesting comment. It will excellently serve the reader who wants to know something of what Babbitt and More stand for and to see how they are related to their times. Nothing will take the place, of course, of the books of the men themselves, but Munson's book provides an illuminating and stimulating introduction.

The book includes a well-informed account of the careers of the two leading humanists, and a superb report of the fracas occasioned by the renewed journalistic interest in them. The chapter on the European groups and movements related to the American humanists, so little known in this country, brings together a mass of useful information from widely scattered sources. Other chapters are devoted to a sketch of the modern mind, a presentation of Matthew Arnold as a working model for the humanist ideal, and an exposition of the humanist critique of modern education. Curiously enough, there is no chapter on the humanists as literary critics. This at least serves to draw attention to the fact that they are not exclusively occupied with letters, but the omission seems a decided gap.

Munson's purpose is critical as well as expository, his own position being that of an outsider who admires much in the humanists and wants to see them prosper, but finally finds them inadequate. The second half of *The Dilemma of the Liberated* is largely taken up with finding shortcomings in their work and expounding the religious position

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he favours, which he feels—apparently very soundly—to be remote from humanism.

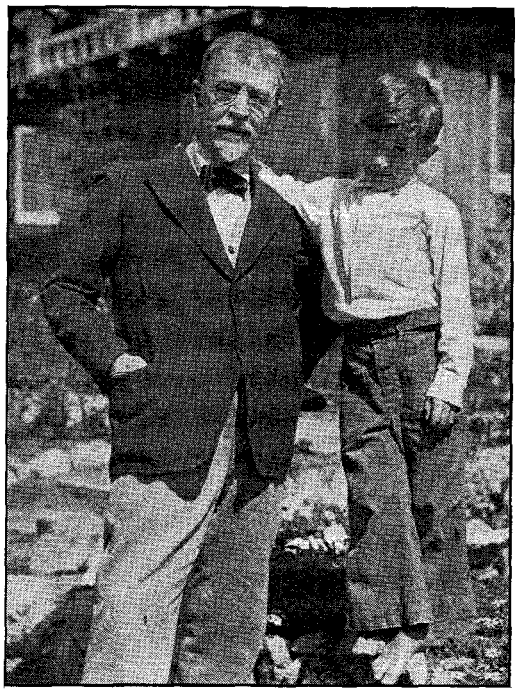
In a chapter on science he chides the humanists for a lack of adventurousness and flexibility in not "adapting their psychology to the labyrinth of modern physics". One hardly needs to be completely convinced of the cogency of L. T. More's strictures on the new physicists to feel that his reasoned opposition is more admirable than a mere fashionable following of the philosophical bigwigs of the day. Calling the one standpattism and the other adventurousness, agility, and so on, leaves the truth of the question untouched. We do not know where Munson got the idea that L. T. More is a defender of Cartesianism. Surely not from reading his chapter on Descartes in *The Limitations of Science.*

Munson's longest chapter is a criticism of the economic and political views of More and Babbitt. It is such a confused hodge-podge of various kinds of weirdness—Orage, Proudhon, Sorel, Marx, Major Douglas, Benda, Croly, G. B. M.—that a volume would be needed to unravel its tangled skein. The upshot is that he finds Babbitt and More good humanists but bad economists, "uncritically tied to the existing industrial order" and governed by class feelings. Suffice it to say that Munson has merely followed all the other victims of the humanitarian fever in confusing the defense of the institution of private property with blind devotion to the status quo. We admit freely that there are passages in both More and Babbitt which can be read to mean an acquiescence in shocking abuses. But a critic who does not realize that a belief in private property, competition, and the other fundamentals of the humanist individualism is entirely consistent with the most drastic dissatisfaction with present conditions, and who has not taken into account the utterances of both More and Babbitt severely critical of the whole basis of the modern industrial order, misses the point of their position. Munson's criticism is at bottom the humanitarian criticism, with the usual feeling that there is a lack of a sense of justice and of decent human sympathies in any position other than its own. Naturally, More and Babbitt are immune to such criticism; not only does it come from an attitude they have devoted most of their careers to combating, but it is primarily criticism not of their ideas but of their characters. The only profitable way to criticize them—and we think they have here earned criticism in several respects—is to show that certain judgments are not necessarily the only ones compatible with their principles. And this involves a deeper understanding of their principles than Munson reveals.

GRACE HEGGER LEWIS

and her son, Wells, at St. Gilgan, wearing the Austrian costumes which are described in her novel, "Half a Loaf".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LINCOLN STEFFENS

and young Mr. Steffens. "The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens", a fascinating tale of journalism and reforming through forty years, has recently been issued in a one-volume edition.

The last two chapters of the book go from bad to worse. There is a long and mystifying exhortation on "the religious spirit", some strange notions about the will as "an independent activity of the psyche" to be fetched up out of our latencies by the proper means (these are not revealed), an enthusiastic essay on Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, and finally a cryptic hint at the "new semeniferous principle for human culture" waiting for humanism to clear the path before it. Most depressing of all, perhaps, is Munson's appended list of acknowledgments in which he names the books "that have been of great service to me in forming my own point of view as distinct from the humanistic viewpoint. They are, in metaphysics, *The Three Conventions* by Denis Saurat; in psychology, *Beyond Behaviorism* by Robert Courtney; in literature, *Readers and Writers* and *The Art of Reading* by A. R. Orage". We have read the volumes by Saurat and Courtney, and regret to report that there is no more appropriate word for them than nutty. Orage was an interesting editor and causeur in his day, and the two books compiled from his *New Age* pieces stand up remarkably well for current journalism; but he was never near to being "the finest living English literary critic", as Munson calls him. Furthermore, he is principally used in *The Dilemma of the Liberated* as an authority not on literature, but on religion, occultism, psychology, and economics.

"Avez-vous Ulysses?"

from Helen Hokinson's book of amusing drawings, "So You're Going to Buy a Book!" Like most of the book's contents, this drawing appeared originally in "The New Yorker".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Santayana Harks Back

It is fortunate for the humanists that they are not so much under the sway of George Santayana's mighty intellect as so many of their contemporaries: else on reading the first instalment of his little book *The Genteel Tradition at Bay* (Scribner's) as it appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature* they would have rushed out in a body and joined the Church, only to be forced to the ignominy of public recantation a few weeks later, when they learned from the other instalments that they had made a mistake. Santayana first states that theocracy and "belief in a precise divine revelation" are what the humanists "must endeavor to restore, if they understand their own position". Then he devotes two chapters to demonstrating the anachronistic folly and total worthlessness of any such program.

This is not all that is in Santayana's book, to be sure, but it will serve to show how close he comes to humanism and how close he comes to sense. It is shocking to see a man like Santayana undertake to write on a subject without informing himself about it. But at least it absolves one of the need of examining his book at length; which is the more grateful, since beside being wide of the mark it is distressingly prolix and incoherent, and merely repeats what he has said better before. There is one quotation from *Humanism and America* in the book (its meaning turned upside down), but we hazard the guess that for most of his information Santayana relied on letters from Dr. Canby imploring him to send over reinforcements to help quell the reactionary insurrection of the humanists; there is a suspicious resemblance between the misunderstandings of the two men.

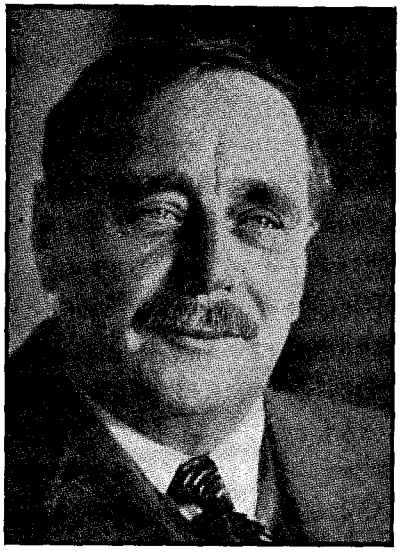
The term "genteel tradition" becomes no more coherent in Santayana's new essay than

CLARE BOOTHE BROKAW

whose satirical sketches have become familiar to readers of "Vanity Fair" and have now been collected in a book, "Stuffed Shirts".

it was in his 1911 lecture on *The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy*. There, you will remember, it was sometimes Calvinism, sometimes a mixture of Calvinism and transcendentalism, sometimes merely a stodgy respectability. It was something that was purely American, and yet present in the Koran, Spinoza, Cardinal Newman, Carlyle, and Kant; it had also been handed down from Socrates. In the new essay Matthew Arnold is added to the transmitters of the genteel tradition on one page (p. 69), and on another (p. 12) he is called the last of the humanists deriving from the Renaissance; the new humanists are said to be for him in one place and against him in the other. (Arnold is described as representing a culture "always tolerant, always fluid, smiling on everything exotic and on everything new". Goodness!)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



H. G. WELLS

The term "genteel tradition" is so highly thought of among our intellectuals that we hereby offer a prize of $50,000 to anyone assembling Santayana's various uses of it and of the word "genteel" into a consistent, intelligible unity; the reward will be $100,000 if Santayana himself performs the task.

In his first discussion of the genteel tradition, while fundamentally incoherent, Santayana at least produced engaging writing and frequently hit close to the American mind. The new essay shows a sad falling off in skill and a shocking distance from his subject. It is not merely that he has been absent from America since 1912: he has lost contact with his times. He is still shadow-boxing with the ghost of Josiah Royce and getting even with some stuffy Cambridge households that gave him unhappy hours in the nineties. The views of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, with which he is supposed to be dealing, simply never appear. In 1920 he wrote, reminiscing of the eighties and nineties, that in academic America "it was only the Calvinistic tradition, when revived in some modern disguise, that could stir there the secret cord of reverence and enthusiasm". And now having heard of the enthusiasm for Babbitt and More, he harks back to the old days and produces a new essay. It is all very sad.

One prominent humanist ploughed doggedly through half of *The Genteel Tradition at Bay*, but finally tossed it aside saying he would rather read John Dewey.

* * *

H. G. Wells Among Us

We are sorry to risk appearing ungracious by greeting Mr. Wells on his visit to this country with a resurrection of Stuart Sherman's twenty-year-old essay on him. But we believe that the Sherman study spreads out on the table, as it has never been done before or since, the essence of H. G. Wells. It is worth recalling that we had in this country, for a few years, a man capable of such brilliant intellectual autopsies. And especially when the subject is a writer so multifariously in touch with his age, and so powerful in shaping it, as H. G. Wells.

To be sure, Sherman touched on only one side of Wells: Wells the reformer and educator: Wells the prophet and hero: Wells the guide, philosopher, and adoring friend of most of the young men and women of his time. A rounded estimate would treat also Wells the romancer and Wells the novelist, and would be written in a very different key. No modern English writer has provided a richer and more varied abundance of sheer literary delight than H. G. Wells. The reading public will long cherish the tales with which he burst on the literary world in the mid-nineties, the "scientific romances" of the kind which he originated and has alone successfully attempted: *The Time Machine, The Wonderful Visit, The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Invisible Man*, and the other "tales of

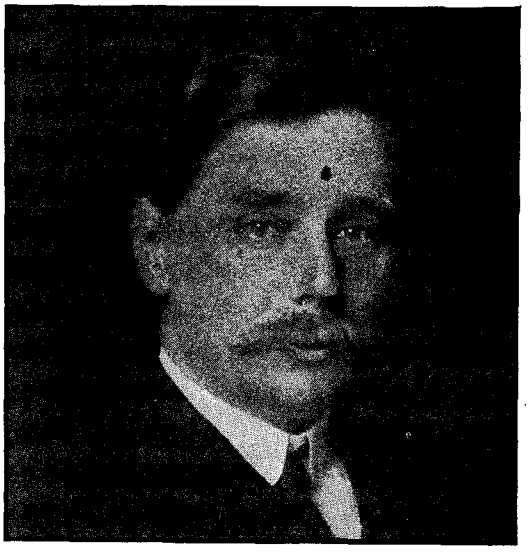
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

H. G. WELLS
at the beginning of his career. From THE BOOKMAN *of January 1897.*

time and space". Even more fondly will they read and reread the great series of novels with which Wells dazzled the first decade of this century: *Love and Mr. Lewisham, Kipps, Tono-Bungay*, the *History of Mr. Polly*. And this is but a partial list of his munificent presents. Fortunately the time is rapidly approaching, as the ideas to which Wells has devoted most of his energies since 1910 are increasingly discredited and forsaken, when Wells the superb writer of fiction can be appreciated to the full and put in his rightful place high in the line of English novelists, without the distracting intrusion of the absurdities and stupidities associated with Wells the bogus prophet, the shallow philosopher, the ignorant historian, the pseudo-scientist.

The present visit is the third which Mr. Wells has paid to this country. The first was in the spring of 1906, when he spent two months in the cities and university towns of the East gathering material for his book *The Future in America*. At that time *Kipps* had just been published and *Tono-Bungay* was germinating. But those were Wells's active socialist years, and most of his time was taken up with propaganda; the American journey came in the middle of his celebrated intellectual journey into and out of the Fabian Society. While he was in New York another distinguished European writer arrived, Maxim Gorki, and became the center of a great public uproar when objection was made to his entering the country with a woman not his wife. In his excellent book on Wells, Geoffrey West reports that before he set out Wells was asked by a friend to look up a certain Upton Sinclair, a young writer of genius who was starving in New York. But when he arrived the name of Upton Sinclair greeted him on every side: *The Jungle* was sweeping the country and showering its author with money and fame.

The second visit to America came at the end of 1921, when Wells was invited by the New York *World* to cover the Washington conference on naval disarmament. As jour-



H. G. WELLS
as he looked at the time of his first visit to America. From THE BOOKMAN *of September 1909.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frank Harris.

nalism his articles were masterly, but of course full of the Wellsian brand of internationalism and pacifism; and his fanatical vilification of France finally forced the London *Daily Mail* to refuse to publish his dispatches. Those were the days when *The Outline of History* kept Wells's name on the best-seller lists month after month and brought him a larger audience than ever before. (By the latest figures nearly two million copies of the various editions of the *Outline* have been bought.) But alas, the novels were infrequent and inconsiderable. One could have put up with *The Undying Fire, The Secret Places of the Heart, Men Like Gods, The Dream, Christina Alberta's Father*, if only the all-absorbing *Outline* had been a worthy substitute. But such wretched history!

We discover with pleasure, by the way, on turning to the files, that THE BOOKMAN was commendably prompt in recognizing a new talent in Wells when first he appeared. Special attention was drawn in the editorial columns to his very first book, *Select Conversations With an Uncle*, upon its publication in 1895. "We cannot be too thankful to Mr. Wells", said the reviewer. *The Time Machine* and *The Wonderful Visit*, issued later in the same year, convinced the editors that "Mr. Wells is an author worth cultivating; we shall hear more of him by and by". Early in 1896 he was given a biographical sketch and a photograph, admiration having been increased rather than dampened by the "exceedingly unpleasant monsters" of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. A few months later Wells's first try at a novel, *The Wheels of Chance*, provoked another and still longer editorial tribute. "If Mr. Wells can develop this vein," was the verdict, "he will enter the field of fiction to stay." By the beginning of 1897 the propaganda in THE BOOKMAN and doubtless elsewhere began to bear fruit: "Mr. Wells appears to have caught the fancy of the American public at last, and the publishers here are taking a keen interest in his future work".

* * *

Frank Harris

It was appropriate that the late Frank Harris should have been the "discoverer" of H. G. Wells: with all their differences, the two men are fundamentally of the same anarchic, disruptive temperament, and they have left not dissimilar impresses on their times. It was in 1891 that Wells, then a hard-working biology teacher of twenty-five years, sent an article called *The Rediscovery of the Unique* to the *Fortnightly Review*, and met his first literary success when the editor, Frank Harris, accepted it. Doubtless the ar-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ticle was well written, but its appeal for Harris becomes inevitable when we learn that it was an early exposition of that philosophy of flux and blur, that insistence on "Change as the first and final fact" and on our inability to make final distinctions or attain any but pragmatic and variable truths, which is the congenial philosophy of the disruptive temperament, is indeed entirely its creation.

Wells quickly sent a second paper entitled *The Universe Rigid*, and received an invitation from Harris to call at the *Fortnightly* office. Geoffrey West has told amusingly of Wells's perplexity as to what was expected, and even how to dress, on this first contact with the world of letters. "After long thought, he decided that a morning coat and silk hat would best fit the case, and proceeded to furbish up these rather shabby items of his wardrobe. The silk hat in particular offered difficulties, but a wet cloth achieved an admirable polish." It was only as he was crossing what seemed an endless expanse of floor to the vast table behind which Harris was fortified that "he saw that the polished portions of the hat had completely lost their lustre, and that the drying surface was ragged and curling". And to his increased confusion Harris was "staring hard at this immensely visible object".

But Harris quickly got down to business by flinging Wells's manuscript forward on the table and demanding, his waxed moustaches trembling, "Before Gar-r-r-d, what's this bloody article *about*? What's the sense of it? What's it trying to *say*?" The article was an outline of a four-dimensional time-space system. Apparently the explanation which Wells produced was momentarily plausible but something less than permanently convincing: the article was accepted and put into type, but never published.

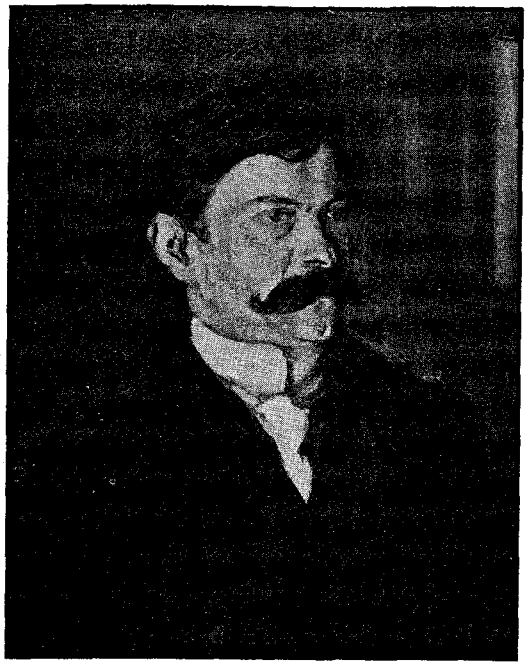
But this was before Wells had completely

Cover of the first illustrated supplement of "The Saturday Review", published Christmas, 1896. From "Men and Memories" by Sir William Rothenstein.

turned writer, and before Harris had struck his stride as an editor. It was three years later that Wells suffered a breakdown in health, happened during his convalescence upon J. M. Barrie's tale of journalism, *When a Man's Single*, and was straightway inspired to try his hand at journalism—with immediate and prodigious success. Meantime Harris had acquired the weekly *Saturday Review* and was making it the most influential paper of the day. He quickly added Wells to the galaxy of stars his editorial genius was assembling about him.

Those were the great days of Frank Harris. Up to that time everything had been preparation: afterward nearly everything was reminiscence or merely extension of work begun earlier. For a few years, 1894 to 1898, Harris's turbulent, truculent, theatrical nature, his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



FRANK HARRIS (1895)
Painting by Sir William Rothenstein, reproduced from his book "Men and Memories".

mixture of poetry and fireworks, of sentimentality and coarseness, of hero-worship and bourgeois-baiting, corresponded to something deep in the life around him and enabled him to strut across the stage in a major rôle.

The influence of Harris's *Saturday Review* is not always remembered. In retrospect one is likely to think first of *The Yellow Book*, of Symons's *Savoy*, of Henley's *National Observer* and *New Review*, of Lewis Hind's *Academy*. Yet none of these wielded the power of Harris's magazine, and none was so widely imitated. A good picture of its effect on its contemporaries, especially in this country, can be gained from THE BOOKMAN's editorial on the occasion of Harris's retirement as editor (BOOKMAN, February 1899). On the whole, THE BOOKMAN did not like its contemporary very much. Not only was it annoyed by the *Saturday's* constant slurs at America, but it felt that the magazine displayed a deplorable moral tone.

"Cleverness rather than honesty has been its aim in the past, and it has said a number of good things on behalf of many very bad causes. . . . In point of mere cleverness, it had not an equal among all the weekly periodicals in the English language; and yet so heavy was its moral handicap that it was not clever enough. . . . During its recreant days its literary influence has been considerable. In the purely subjective criticism that leads nowhere, it inspired many imitators, but remained without a peer. Some of its slapdash was delightful. And besides slapdash there were honest essays in criticsm, as keen and vivid as they were genuine; but these were comparatively rare, and it was the slapdash for the most part that was imitated. In this country, especially, the compliment of imitation was paid it, and many a brawling little Thersites of the literary press owed its rise and fall in the United States to the smart example of the *Saturday Review*. Groups of young men, mistaking their growing pains for the anguish of insurgent genius, gathered and said, 'We, too, were born in Arcady. Let us found something and say clever things against other things'. And thereupon appeared a large number of little winding-sheets of early hopes, with cover designs in which emaciated young women, done in black and red, writhed predominantly. Inside, you read the language of revolt. Intense young souls, tortured by you knew not what, hurled themselves upon something or other that you could not make out, and tore it tooth and nail. Then the little magazines all died, and silence reigned again. The real meaning of this disturbance in Lilliput is not known. Like the Children's Crusade it remains one of the enigmas of history. But its connection with French decadence and symbolism is not more certain than its relation to the easily imitated mordancy of the *Saturday Review*. In fact it is to the latter influence that the movement owed what little vital energy it possessed."

This aspect of the *Saturday's* work is today largely overlooked, and *The Yellow Book* and other magazines are thought of as the source

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the new tendencies. The explanation of this disproportion is probably not hard to arrive at. The other magazines had attractive qualities which the *Saturday* lacked: there was always something ultimately repulsive about Harris and about whatever he did, however fascinating or admirable or weighty one might think it. This defect works strongly against the longevity of his achievements.

THE BOOKMAN found a moral in the immediate sequel to Harris's retirement: "So the *Saturday* has had to creep back to the fold and ask forgiveness of those who are old enough to remember its virtuous youth: while its bad spirit, the former editor, is exorcised, and, if the story is true, goes to manage a hotel at Monte Carlo. It is exceedingly hard to keep from moralising about this: but the story is so perfect in all ethical requisites that it is a parable just as it stands". Be that as it may, certain it is that from the time he left the *Saturday*, though only forty-three, Harris was on the down grade in position, in achievement, in reputation, and very obviously in contentment. He was an exile and a man who had done his best work. As the years went by he was increasingly beset by poverty, ill-health, failing memory, and the bitterness of neglect. Not that this period was entirely barren: some of his best stories were written then, and most of his *Contemporary Portraits*. And the years in America, 1915-1922, while on the whole fruitless, must have contained much that was satisfying to Harris's inordinate craving for attention and admiration: those years marked the arrival in this country of the spirit of the nineties, as THE BOOKMAN has noted before, and Harris was able in a fashion to live his great days over again and at the same time to be received as a hero. The powers that had made him "the greatest conversationalist of his day" were still with him, and he had a whole country-full of new listeners.

The first thing we ever heard about Harris was the breathless account by a newspaper man of a lunch at which Harris was present. Harris held the group enthralled. The lunch went on through the afternoon, then into the evening; it became a dinner, then a soirée, and finally broke up toward three in the morning—with Harris talking all the time. His home in the Village and his office-and-bookshop on lower Fifth Avenue were centers for a throng of admirers—and his visitors did well to appear as admirers, whether they were or not. We remember stopping at his shop one day, at a time when we were trying to assemble a set of his works. We asked him if he knew where we could obtain a copy of his novel *Great Days*, ex-

FRANK HARRIS

twenty years ago. From THE BOOKMAN *of September 1911.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SUSAN SMITH

drawn by Jules Pascin, the brilliant young artist whose suicide occurred last year. Pascin appears recognizably as one of the characters in Miss Smith's novel of modern Mexico, "The Glories of Venus".

plaining that it was the only book of his we lacked. Harris's disgust was terrifying. "The only book of mine you *like*!" Fortunately we were able to reassure him.

What of Harris's writings will be read in fifty or in ten years? Surely not his criticism, which was merely impressionist criticism coming from a basically eccentric personality. Perhaps some of his stories, if he has the luck to fall into the hands of an editor who will recognize the occasions when Harris's remarkable fictional powers were used on material suited to them. This did not happen very often—Harris thought himself equal to any subject whatsoever—but there are some eight or ten little masterpieces waiting to be brought together. But it is probably as a chronicler of his times that Harris will be remembered. The series of *Contemporary Portraits* contain numerous pages and chapters that form an unrivalled picture of some of the outstanding personalities of the time. A selection from the *Portraits*, supplemented by some of the less personal parts of his autobiography, will probably long be a source of informal insight into English affairs during the past fifty years. The *Oscar Wilde*? It is a hasty, uneven book; and besides, there will hardly be many more people interested enough in Wilde to go through two volumes about him. The *Bernard Shaw*? That remains to be seen.

In THE BOOKMAN for May 1930 appeared an article entitled "Oscar Wilde's Unwritten Play" by T. H. Bell. Mr. Bell prefaced his article with these paragraphs:

"I was the intermediary—selected by Oscar Wilde himself—in the collaboration arranged between him and Frank Harris for the production of Wilde's last play.

"The continued and increasing interest in Wilde, a period in which I have the necessary leisure, and certain recent events of which I became aware lately (such as, for instance, the publication of a play in New York representing Lord Alfred Douglas as the evil influence which ruined a great but weak man) have stirred me up to write, while Harris is still alive to contradict me if he thinks the thing unfairly presented, the true story of that 'collaboration'—a story which only two or three know and which I alone, apparently, am willing to tell."

Some months later we received the following letter from Harris:

To the Editor of *The Bookman*,
Dear Sir,

Someone has just sent me an article in your paper entitled *Oscar Wilde's Unwritten Play*

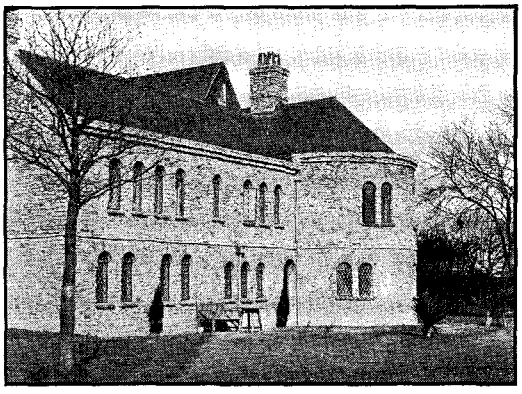
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

written and signed by T. H. Bell. Mr. Bell pretends to give conversations between myself and Oscar Wilde without any regard to truth or even to probability, the supposition all through being that my play *Mr. and Mrs. Daventry* was taken from a play of Oscar Wilde. Here is one sentence of the screed he gives: "Oscar said, 'No, Frank, I shall never write that play; take it and write it yourself; I give it to you' ".

Now, I never heard Wilde's play. I remember as I have stated in my autobiography hearing Oscar telling one scene which he said he thought of using. I knew it would suit my play *Mr. and Mrs. Daventry* so I bought from him the right to use that one scene. He afterwards made fun of me by telling me that the scene I had bought was taken from Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, but I had already paid several of Oscar's friends considerable sums because of that one scene.

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH
at her desk, on the first floor of the tower described below.

I never heard Oscar tell his play written or unwritten. I only heard one scene. Does Mr. Bell imagine that Oscar Wilde would have allowed anyone to steal his play and put it out under his own name? Particularly a play that had a great success and brought in thousands to the author? Mr. Bell has even the impudence to pretend that I worsened Wilde's sketch and he ends up by saying that *Mr. and Mrs. Dav-*



(Above) The house which Sheila Kaye-Smith and her husband T. Penrose Fry have recently built in Sussex. It stands on a two-hundred acre estate near the town of Northian. The round tower was made by joining two of the oast-houses familiar to the Sussex country-side.
(On the right) Miss Kaye-Smith and Mr. Fry in the second-floor study of the oast-house tower. (Photographs copyright by Eric Gray.)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMPTON MACKENZIE

entry went 6 weeks in London whilst it went over a hundred and fifty nights.

The only particle of truth I find in this long article is on page 142 where Mr. Bell says that "Wilde had not written one word of the play and he told it differently every time he told it" and he adds "But always as I heard him tell it, it seemed to me to be his best play", which merely shows what Mr. Bell's judgment is worth. And he finishes his description by saying "Harris was enthusiastic over it"—probably because Harris never heard it at all.

I wish you would give publicity to this letter. The idea of my stealing a play of Wilde or anything of Wilde is mere nonsense.

Sincerely yours,
FRANK HARRIS

We sent Harris's letter to Mr. Bell, and received an answer which put his article in a better light than Harris's blanket denial would seem to indicate. We will give Mr. Bell's side in an early issue.

Please, Mr. Mackenzie!

Mr. Compton Mackenzie is the Scottish Nationalists' candidate for the post of Lord Rector of the Glasgow University. American university life has no parallel to offer to either the office of Lord Rector or the spectacular battles which go on before the final elections, battles in which the students riot as a matter of course, the candidates never come near the districts by a convention which holds that their lives, during the electioneering, are not worth a penny, and in which the stump-speakers for the candidates are subjected to heckling and even kidnapping and forcible detention. Mr. G. K. Chesterton is among those called upon by his fellow writer to take the stump for him, partly no doubt because kidnapping would be so formidable an undertaking in his case. Let us hope, for the good of letters, that Mr. Chesterton's persuasiveness will either fall on deaf ears or that the office may be a purely titular one, which will provide Mr. Mackenzie with an imposing costume to set off his strikingly handsome and misleadingly dour Scottish countenance on state occasions and still leave him time to be about his real business—the obviously heaven-intended job which he has put off far too long as it is—that of writing a whole book about the grand, vulgar old girl who is always cropping up in his books under one name or another, and who richly deserves a book of her own.

This robustious matron was undoubtedly born at some legendary time in the wings or green-room of a theatre; often the best qualities of Mr. Mackenzie as an author seem to come from his connection with the stage. Mr. Mackenzie is of a royal stage family in the direct line. (His sister, as everyone knows, is the incredibly lovely and skilful Fay Compton.) Surely it is because he is old friends with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Melodrama that he is able to be melodramatic to excellent purpose whenever it serves his story, and surely it is his connection with the stage that is to be thanked for the character-parts he contrives when his books need comic relief or a *divertissement* to fill in between two main scenes of his story. The stage provided him outright with the setting of some of his major novels, among them *Carnival*—still stubbornly defended as his masterpiece by one faction of Mackenzieites against those who hold for *Youth's Encounter* and *Sinister Street*. Suspense and character work have much to do with the effectiveness of his blistering novels of espionage, *Gallipoli Memories* and *The Three Couriers*, books so convincing in their bitterly humorous re-

FAITH COMPTON MACKENZIE

wife of Compton Mackenzie, and author of "The Sibyl of the North", a biography of Christina of Sweden.

counting of the blunders of the Intelligence Office in war-time.

It is in his books of straight humour that Mr. Mackenzie's debt to the stage is most easily seen. Starting with one or two normal and pleasant persons, Mr. Mackenzie throws in a good dozen character-parts and lets situations come as they may. He shows an enormous fertility in these grotesques; any one of them, one feels, would have been enough for an entire book in the hands of a less richly endowed author. But it is the grand old girl we speak of that he does best of all. Always fat, invariably vulgar, always getting the last drop of enjoyment from living, whenever Mr. Mackenzie lets her appear she runs away with the show.

She runs away with Mr. Mackenzie's latest book, *For Sale*, in spite of the fact that her creator rings down the curtain on her when she becomes too much of a handful. Admirers of P. G. Wodehouse who have missed Mr. Mackenzie's lighter books could hardly start with a better one than this, though they should be warned in advance that he seldom bothers to tie up his story, but just goes on till he's had enough and then stops. *For Sale* (published by Doubleday, Doran) is the story of Mr. Weatherall, who buys a lot in a suburban development and goes in for country life—dressing the part with care, to the exquisite despair of his adolescent sons, Ralph and Roger, who are humiliated almost to nausea by their father's absurdities. The character parts of the story are taken by the other lot-owners, and to the most disreputable of these Ralph and Roger are drawn at once in deathless friendship. The eccentric, bewhiskered uncle of Texas Bill (Huck Finn at one remove) in a moment of rare and bibulous good humour takes all three boys to a variety show in London, and it is Ralph's good for-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FRANK SULLIVAN

When we asked Frank Sullivan for a photograph he sent us the above, explaining that "It was taken in the costume I wore at the Beaux-Arts Ball".

tune this time to sit next to Mr. Mackenzie's *pièce de résistance*, the recurring lady.

Wardrobe mistress in one book, lodging-house keeper in another, here she is a dubious widow (her husband turns up later to spoil a picnic, when Mr. Mackenzie felt his hands were too full) who takes the party to her heart, finds out at once who is who in the conglomerate group, and passes the candied fruit about:

"Here, lean over a minute, ducky" (she says to Ralph). "I want to ask you something."

Ralph's head floated about on billows of spinach-green satin as the enormous woman leaned down and asked him if the gent with the hair was his pa.

"No, he's just a friend. He's the uncle of Texas Bill."

"Is he now? Well, you often hear the saying, 'There's hair!' But there *is* hair. Well, I saw the wild man of Borneo once, and I saw Jo-Jo the dog-faced man from Siberia only last week. But they both were behind bars, as you might say. I don't recolleck seeing anybody out and about with more hair than what he's got. Ask him to have a fruit. And he'll want to be careful, because they're very sticky, and if he gets one in that beard of his he won't find it again in a hurry. It'll be the old story of the needle and the haystack all over again."

. . . Oh, well, it's probably no use to give samples. Either you like her or you don't, we suppose. Mr. Mackenzie obviously does, and he should see the writing on the wall: for the sake of those who never get enough of her he should be about his heaven-appointed work of giving her a whole book. And he'll want to be quick about it, because he's likely to turn into a National Figure, and he won't get out of that in a hurry. It'll be the old story of opportunity knocking all over again.

FRANK SULLIVAN

in the version provided by his publishers, who have just issued his book of humour "Broccoli and Old Lace".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHARLES DICKENS AND HIS OLDEST FRIEND

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS TO THOMAS BEARD

Edited by Bernard Darwin

Part II

As we recorded last month, Dickens decided to go to America before starting work on *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and sailed on January 3rd, 1842, on the Cunard steamer *Britannia* with his wife and a maid, landing in Boston on January 28th after a terrible voyage. The following letter written on the first of May tells of that voyage. There is about it here and there a likeness to what he afterwards wrote in *American Notes*. There could be no better example of the pages of brilliant writing that Dickens could, when he had a mind to it, lavish light-heartedly on his friends.

Niagara Falls (Upon the English *side)*
First of May, Sunday—1842.

My dear Beard,

This letter will not be as old when it comes to you, as (observing this date) you will at first suppose it. I write it now: thinking it very probable that if I don't I may be again disappointed in my endeavours to find time for that purpose. But I shall be obliged, for steamboat purposes, to carry it on to Montreal: and before I post it, I will add a line or two with the latest intelligence of our health and spirits.

I dare say you have long ago set me down as a forgetful, unmindful, discourteous, unfriendly —not to say utterly profligate and abandoned villain. But we have been travelling so far and so constantly—have been, if I may be allowed the expression, such perfect Pashanger-Marjits—and have been moreover, so beset, waylaid, hustled, set upon, beaten about, trampled down, mashed, bruised, and pounded by crowds, that I never knew less of myself in all my life, or had less time for those confidential interviews with myself whereby I earn my bread, than in these United States of America. But all our journeyings by land and water: by coach and steamer: wagon, railway, prairie, lake and river, shall be yours anon: and I will not be tempted to take the edge off that hearty laughter we shall raise (please God) in number one, over its not despicable vintages, before we are many weeks older, by launching into present description. We have been into the Far West—into the Bush—the Forest—the Log Cabin—the Swamp—the Black Hollow—and out upon the open Prairies. By the time we reach home, we shall have travelled ten thousand miles or more. I have a horrible fear that I shall return "a bore"—not to anticipate which dire consummation, I will only add, on this head, that we sail from New York, per *George Washington* Packet *Ship* (none of your steamers) on Tuesday the seventh of June. Hoo-ray-ay-ay-ay-ay-ay-ay!!!!!

You will naturally enquire about the medicine chest—Oh! Shade of Sir Humphrey Davy!—if you could only have seen me, Beard, endeavouring (with that impossible pair of scales, and those weights, invisible to the naked eye) to make pills in heavy weather, on the rolling Atlantic! If you could only have seen me, when Kate and Anne were deadly fearful of shipwreck —bent on raising their spirits by means of calomel, and ringing the changes on all the bottles in the Mahogany box to restore their peace of mind! Anne struck at last. She objected to take any more pills, powders, or mixtures, "unless she knew what was inside of 'em". This stipulation did not please me by any means for two reasons—firstly, because it implied the absence of that blind reliance and faith which are essen-

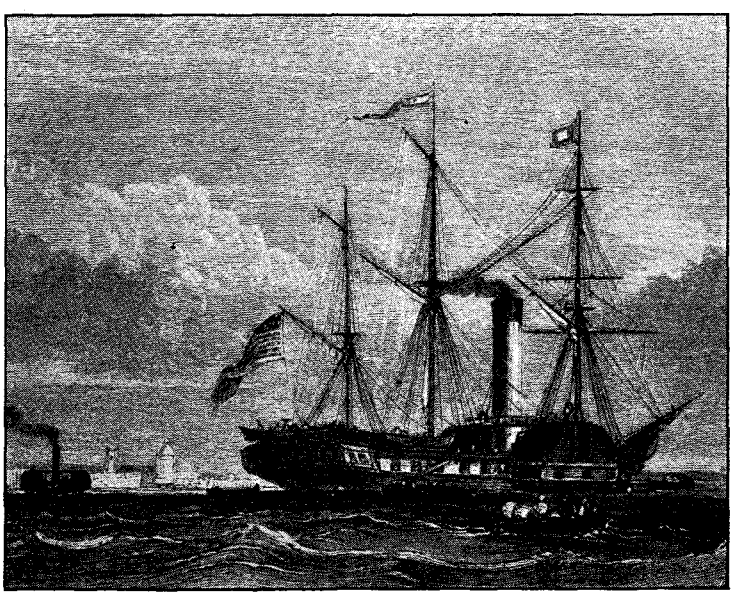
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tial to all great cures: and secondly, because I didn't always know myself. She made distant allusions, too, to having her wages "riz"—and to physic not being in her articles of engagement. I therefore stopped short: but sometimes in that unsettled state of body which fast travelling engenders she asks for physic—and then—then—I give it her. No half measures. Strong and plenty of it.

This is the only place we have had to ourselves since we left home. We came here last Tuesday: and stay until next Wednesday morning. Directly I arrived, I yearned to come over to the English Side, and ordered the Ferryman out, in a pouring rain, for that purpose. It fortunately happens that there really is no point of view to see the Falls from, properly, but this. They are under our windows. But in any case I should have come here. You cannot conceive with what transports of joy I beheld an English Sentinel—though he didn't look much like one, I confess, with his boots outside his trousers and a great fur cap on his head. I was taken dreadfully loyal after dinner, and drank the Queen's health in a bumper—in Port too, and by no means bad Port—the first I had put to my lips, since leaving home.

I was not sick for more than five or six days coming out. We had a terrible passage—had our paddle-boxes torn off, and life-boats broken to pieces—and were under water: wet, and leaking through every seam and crevice, the whole time. The agent at Liverpool came on board with me, and politely begged, on the part of the owners, that I would live in the Ladies' Cabin, which was the best on board. As there were only four ladies in all, we were very comfortable. I ordered dinner, and carved in great state every day. At night, we always had a rubber—Love points: half-crown bets. We had the Doctor down to play, regularly, and every night the Captain appeared at half after ten, and we drank mulled wine together very jovially. I effected various improvements in the cabin: made it very tidy: invented new drinks: suggested the introduction of hot collops for lunch: and was admitted, even by the initiated stewardess, to be a great acquisition to her society.

I only recollect one amusing circumstance in my sickness. One day—it's impossible to say how I got there—I found myself on deck—the ship now on the top of a mountain, now in the bottom of a deep valley. It was blowing hard: and I was holding on to something—I don't know what. I think it was a pump—or a man—or the cow. I can't say for certain, which. My stomach, with its contents, appeared to be in my forehead. I couldn't understand which was the sea and which the sky: and was endeavouring to form an opinion, or a thought,



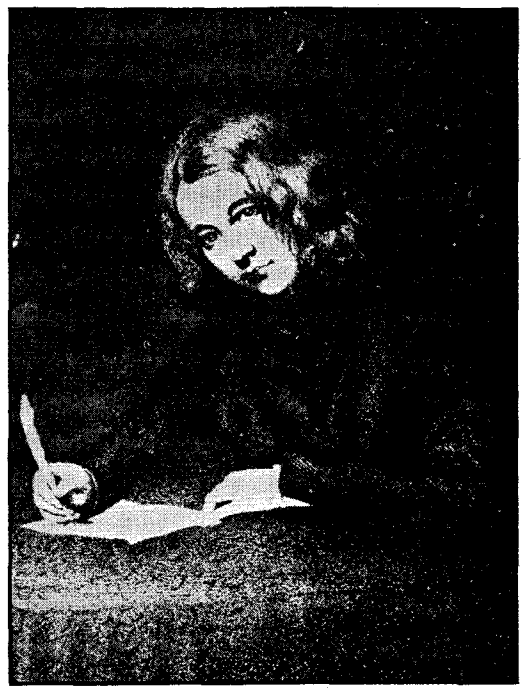
THE VOYAGE TO AMERICA

The steamship "Britannia", which carried Dickens on his voyage to America in 1842, the scene of the first letter in this month's instalment.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or to get some distant glimmering of anything approaching to an idea, when I beheld, standing before me, a small figure with a speaking trumpet. It waved, and fluctuated, and came and went, as if smoke were passing between it and me, but I knew by its very good-natured face, that it was the captain. It waved its trumpet, moved its jaws, and evidently spoke very loud. I no more heard it, than if it had been a dumb man, but I *felt* that it remonstrated with me for standing up to my knees in water—I was, in fact, doing so. Of course I don't know why. Sir, I tried to smile. Yes, such is the affability of my disposition that even in that moment I tried to smile. Not being able to do so, and being perfectly sensible that the attempt had faded into a sickly hiccough, I tried to speak—just, at all events, to explain. But I could only get out two words. They bore reference to the kind of boots I wore and were these—"cork soles". I repeated in the feeblest of voices, and with my body all limp and helpless—"cork soles"—perhaps a hundred times (for I couldn't stop: it was a part of the disease). The captain, seeing that I was quite childish, and for the time a maniac, had me taken below to my berth, and when consciousness returned I was still saying to myself, in a voice that might have melted a heart of sheer steel—"Cork soles—cork soles!"

Soon after this, we had a terrible gale at night. Indeed I believe that gale drove my sickness away. At all events, there were, in the Ladies' Cabin (which adjoined our little state room, the size whereof was something smaller than one of those cabs with the door behind) Kate, Anne, and a little Scotch lady—all in their night dresses, and all nearly mad with terror. It was blowing great guns: the ship was rolling from side to side with her masts in the water at every plunge: and the lightning streamed through the skylight awfully. I could do no less, of course, than try to comfort them: and the first thing that occurred to me was Brandy and water. Now all along this cabin was a great fixed sofa—built so as to form a part of it: and running the whole length. They were all three heaped together at one end of this sofa, when I appeared with the jorum of grog in my hand. Just as I was administering it to the lady who happened to be at the top of the live bundle, the vessel rolled, and to my horror and astonishment they all went to the other end of the couch. By the time I staggered to that end, there came another roll, and they all tumbled back to the other—as if they were in an otherwise empty omnibus, and two giants were tilting it by turns at either end. I dodged them, perhaps for half an hour, without catching them once, with nothing on but a pair of rough trousers and that blue jacket I used to wear at Petersham. And in all the misery of the time I had a keen sense of the absurdity of my position which I cannot, even now, surpass.



A portrait of Dickens by Francis Alexander, of Boston, of which it was said that "Alexander chose a highly original but characteristic pose". Now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

The incidents of the "cork soles" and the three sliding ladies on the sofa both occur in *American Notes* written when he got home again, but I think they are best hot-and-hot in this ebullition of high spirits for the benefit of his friend. Apart from the tremendous gale the voyage was not without incident, for almost at the end of it the ship stuck on a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mud bank in Halifax Harbour and there was much excitement and firing of rockets before the exact situation was discovered.

Dickens left America early in June and his next letter to Beard is dated July 11, 1842. The letter is short and on a small matter of business but its last sentence must not be left out:

> You are acquainted with the business that kept me away from *The Chronicle* last Saturday. George Cruikshank came home in my phaeton, on his head—to the great delight of the loose midnight Loungers in Regent Street. He was last seen taking Gin with a Waterman.

It is only possible to guess to what this refers. Forster mentions that the home-coming was celebrated by a Greenwich dinner at which Cruikshank was present with Talfourd, Maclise, Stanfield, Hood, Barham, Captain Marryat and one or two other friends. I imagine that the drive back to London was from this dinner. I also imagine that it was not nearly so bacchanalian as alleged. Dickens was a most temperate man but he revelled in the picturing of convivial scenes; he enjoyed the making of punch, or even the thought of making it, much more than the drinking of it, and I am sure his face shone over it as did Mr. Micawber's. Cruikshank, who was twenty years older than Dickens, illustrated *Oliver Twist* and also the *Memoirs of Grimaldi* which Dickens edited. When he was an old man, after Dickens's death, he put forward some quite unsubstantiated claims to having suggested the story of *Oliver Twist*.

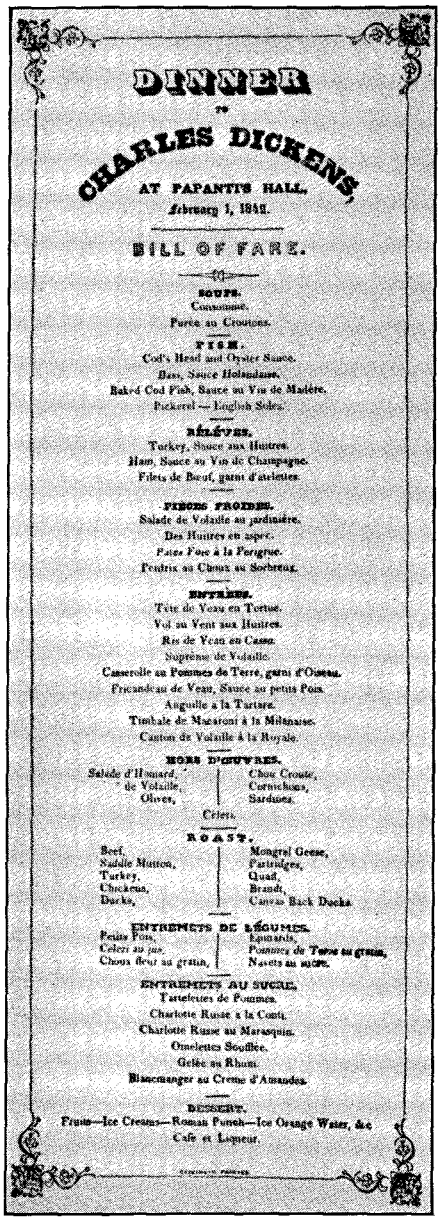
Ten days later from Devonshire Terrace, Dickens is sending Beard a typically cheerful invitation to another dinner.

> I have consulted Mr. Groves of Charing Cross. His suggestive mind gave birth to this remarkable expression "then why not consider this here breast o' wenson off—and let me git another prime 'un in good eatin' order for you, for Sunday week? What"—continued Mr. Groves—"is the hodds to a day?"
>
> Mr. Groves slapped a piece of venison as he spoke with the palm of his hand: and plainly signified by his manner no less than by his words, that this was wisdom. What do you say to it?—and what your sister?
>
> Faithfully always,
>
> CHARLES DICKENS.
>
> If I don't swim this autumn, may I—but we will not anticipate.

The next letter is dated the 18th of December in the same year, and shows Dickens trying to buy anonymously a picture of his great friend Daniel Maclise.

> I want your help in a pious fraud—such a pious one, that I have no doubt you will give it me. I am anxious for many reasons, to possess a little picture which Maclise is at this minute painting: and I know very well that if I were to say so, he would either insist upon giving it to me or would set some preposterous price upon it, which he can by no means afford to take. Now I think I may purchase it without his knowing I am the purchaser; and if I can, he is a cleverer fellow than I take him to be (highly as I estimate his abilities), if he can ever return the money to me afterwards.
>
> Behold my project.
>
> I want you to write him a note, and say that Mr. So and So of such and such a place in Sussex—one of your country friends—is enthusiastic in his admiration of him, and is very anxious to possess a small picture (he can't afford a large one) of his painting. That he has commissioned you to ask him what he has now by him, and has empowered you to purchase: any subject with *one* figure in it. That you have spoken to me on the subject, and I have mentioned privately to you, his having a most charming picture of a girl at a Waterfall. That you wish to buy the girl at the Waterfall forthwith: that you will take it as a personal favour, if he will sell you the girl at the Waterfall. And that you are prepared to give him money *down* for the girl at the Waterfall, if he will let you know what sum you shall forward to him as her ransom from his damned uncomfortable studio.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



DINNER
TO
CHARLES DICKENS,
AT PAPANTI'S HALL,
February 1, 1842.

BILL OF FARE.

SOUPS.
Consommé.
Purée au Croutons.

FISH.
Cod's Head and Oyster Sauce.
Bass, Sauce Holandaise.
Baked Cod Fish, Sauce au Vin de Madère.
Pickerel — English Soles.

RÉLÉVES.
Turkey, Sauce aux Huitres.
Ham, Sauce au Vin de Champagne.
Filets de Bœuf, garni d'atelettes.

PIECES FROIDES.
Salade de Volaille au jardinière.
Des Huitres en aspec.
Pates Foie à la Perigrue.
Perdrix au Choux au Sorbreux.

ENTREES.
Tête de Veau en Tortue.
Vol au Vent aux Huitres.
Ris de Veau en Casse.
Suprême de Volaille.
Casserolle au Pommes de Terre, garni d'Oiseau.
Fricandeau de Veau, Sauce au petits Pois.
Anguille à la Tartare.
Timbale de Macaroni à la Milanaise.
Canton de Volaille à la Royale.

HORS D'ŒUVRES.
Salade d'Homard, de Volaille, Olives, | Chou Croute, Cornichons, Sardines.
Celeri.

ROAST.
Beef, Saddle Mutton, Turkey, Chickens, Ducks, | Mongrel Geese, Partridges, Quail, Brandt, Canvas Back Ducks.

ENTREMETS DE LÉGUMES.
Petits Pois, Celeri au jus, Choux fleur au gratin, | Epinards, Pommes de Terre au gratin, Navets au sucre.

ENTREMETS AU SUCRE.
Tartelettes de Pommes.
Charlotte Russe à la Conti.
Charlotte Russe au Marasquin.
Omelettes Soufflée.
Gelée au Rhum.
Blancmanger au Creme d'Amandes.

DESSERT.
Fruits—Ice Creams—Roman Punch—Ice Orange Water, &c.
Café et Liqueur.

American hospitality at its most overwhelming: the menu of a welcoming dinner to Dickens in Boston, February 1, 1842.

A hundred, or a hundred and fifty guineas, will most likely be the mark. If you can only buy it, I will give you the needful instantly wherewith to close the bargain: and a hundred and fifty thousand thanks in.

All minor points I leave to your discretion. I suppose you *an't* at home, and *couldn't* dine here today at half past five—could you?

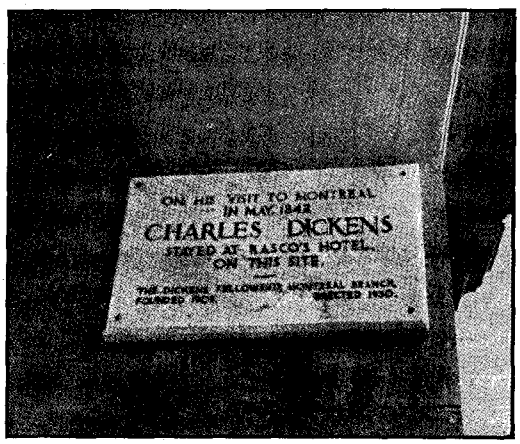
We know from Forster that this pleasant plot succeeded and Maclise did not discover the name of the buyer for some time. When he did he tried to give the money back and Dickens steadfastly refused to take it. Yet Maclise won in the end by painting a picture of Mrs. Dickens as a present a little later. There was a particular reason for Dickens's wanting this picture. Not only was the girl by the waterfall a member of his own family but this waterfall of St. Wighton was part of a delightful holiday in Cornwall, taken after his exertions in America. Maclise, Stanfield, the sea painter, and Forster were his companions and Dickens's own description of the trip to another friend was that they laughed all the time: "It would have done you good to hear me—I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckle off the back of my stock, all the way".

Seven months elapse and then in July, 1843, Dickens is asking Beard to come down to Broadstairs for a holiday.

You know who has always treated you successfully, and you know where that great physician is to be found, during the months of August and September. Kate agrees with me that to make your cure complete there would be nothing like eight undisturbed weeks at Broadstairs with that distinguished man. Now, do think of this. There are a hundred things you could do for the paper on the Margin of the Sea—abstracting Parliamentary Reports, and so forth—matters of great use in the recess. The bedroom you had last year, is ready for you. The bathing machine beckons its wooden finger and cocks its preposterous eye on the sands. The tide rushes in, demanding to be breasted. Dick is all joviality, and very brown in the face from northern toasting. Mac swears he'll "swim to the Goodwin Sands if HE will"—there! Forster asserts with dignified emphasis that "it is the very sort of thing, my dear boy, that Beard

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

requires to set him on his legs". Timber makes himself as unlike a dog as possible, in confirmation of these sentiments. Topping forgets even "Mount Consumious" at the Surrey Zoological Gardens (his crack subject just now) and overhearing these discussions, sadly remarks to me that "a little pickling would make Mister Beard wot he used to be wen he was down at whats his name"—meaning Petersham—in short, every-



A memorial tablet set up to celebrate Dickens's visit to Montreal in the spring of 1842.

thing and everybody are decisive on the subject: so take the Sussex card off your Portmanteau and label it afresh Pashanger-Marjit.

Timber, the dog, occurs in several letters about this time and so does Topping who was the coachman. Mac was Maclise.

Now we have to skip nearly another whole year till 1844 and then there is nothing very important in the letter; but on the back of the envelope is written: "It is particularly requested that if Sir James Graham should open this, he will not trouble himself to seal it." This now recondite allusion is to an event that made a great stir at the time. Graham was the Home Secretary and had ordered letters to Mazzini and other people of a revolutionary turn of mind to be opened in order to see whether plots were hatching. It was a strictly legal action. Graham's predecessor had done the same thing and he himself had done it only at the request of Lord Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary, but Lord Aberdeen seems to have left him in the lurch and he was vigorously assailed on all sides. It was just the kind of thing to arouse Dickens's generous if not always reasonable indignation.

Nearly another year goes by and we find Dickens with his family in Italy. He had been worried over a variety of things and had suddenly decided to move abroad, bag and baggage. *Martin Chuzzlewit,* later acclaimed as one of the greatest of his books, had been, by comparison with his earlier ones, only a *succès d'estime* and this was the more bitter because he himself thought it "immeasurably the best of his stories till then". The *Christmas Carol* had had a wonderful reception, but the business arrangements had not been satisfactory and he had been thoroughly disappointed with the money he made. He was irritated with his publishers and generally harassed and uneasy; with a rapidly increasing family he felt that he must retrench and live cheaply and he also longed for a wider experience of foreign countries. In July, 1844, he set out for Genoa and except for one flying visit home he stayed in Italy till June, 1845. It was at Genoa that he wrote his Christmas story, *The Chimes.* For some time he felt strange there, missed London and could not settle to work; then he thought of his title and all was well. "Let them clash upon me now", he wrote, "from all the churches and convents in Genoa, I see nothing but the old London belfry I have set them in." This letter is from the rooms which he hired in an enormous palace at Genoa, and is written nearly at the end of his stay when he is aching to get home again. The "last one" mentioned in the letter is his fifth child, Francis

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jeffrey, otherwise the "Chicken Stalker", born in 1844.

Palazzo Peschiere, Genoa,
Twentieth May, 1845.

My dear Bardolph,

This is to give you notice and require you, from and after the end of this next coming month of June, to be and hold yourself in readiness to eat and drink a Sunday Dinner at No. 1. Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park, London, on the receipt of a brief and hasty slip of paper, signed, sealed and delivered by the writer hereof. Said writer purporting to leave the sunny clime of Italy (respecting which clime, much Gammon is afloat among the subjects of her Britannic Majesty) very early in June next: and to return to his native and admiring country, by the Pass of the Great St. Gothard, and the river of the Rhine.

I take it for granted, my dear Beard, that you have occasionally declaimed, with mingled vehemence and misgiving against the apparently oblivious memory of the humble individual who has now the honour to—but the life I have led, roaming from place to place and scene to scene —the objects I have crammed and crowded into my inimitable mind—the gentlemanly vagabond I have been, for the last six or eight months—the extraordinary beds I have slept in—and the bewildering amount of fleas, mosquitoes, bugs, and other insects I have unwillingly bepastured —these things have hardly left me any leisure in my holiday, until within the last four or five weeks. During the whole of which time I have been employed chiefly in lying on my back on sofas, and leaning out of windows and over balconies, in a sort of mild intoxication.

Some of the many things I have seen, and many delights I have had (Venice at their head; and the mournful Roman Campagna shining like moonlight through them all) shall be yours over a glass of average good claret and a "light cigar" (on reflection I think that if I mean that for a quotation, it ought to be "guitar", but never mind). I wish you could smoke one with me here. The house is considerably larger than Whitehall: and the great room is fifty feet high, and painted all over. It stands in the midst of Terrace Gardens—overlooks the towers and steeples of the town and comprehends beyond them, the whole blue range of the Mediterranean. There is a perfect forest of orange trees below the windows: which are now in blossom: and the air is sleepy with their fragrance.

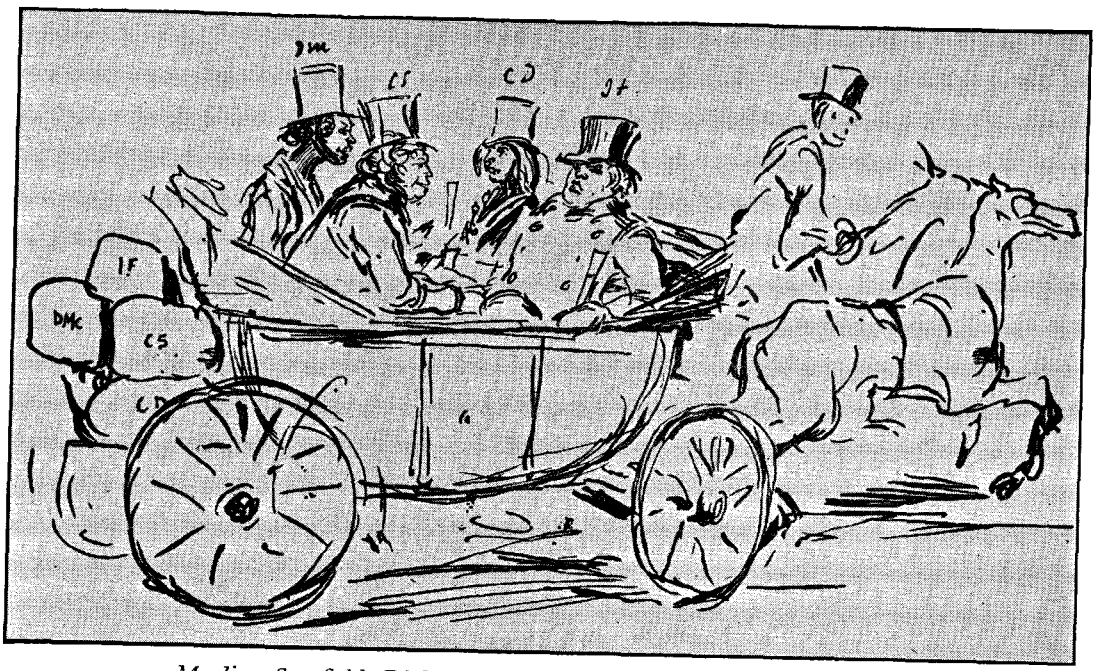
Moreover, there is a marble bath below stairs, from which in all weathers, cold or warm, wet or dry, the heels of the Inimitable B may be beheld protruding as the clock strikes 8 every morning.

But I don't intend to be descriptive. I reserve myself. So do Charley and his two sisters: who will rather astonish you, I think, with sundry Polka, Mazurka, and other fine performances. The last one (boy, I mean) is decidedly a success—a perpetual grin is on his face: and the spoon exercise is amazing.

Some time after getting home he is asking Beard to dinner and writing of a pony he

The portrait of Mrs. Dickens which Maclise painted from gratitude when he discovered the "pious fraud" by which Dickens and Thomas Beard had helped him over a bad period. The *letter is on page 274 of this issue.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Maclise, Stanfield, Dickens and Forster on a holiday in Cornwall.

thinks of trying, with a postscript in the language of Mr. Mantalini:

Will you dine with us on Sunday—alone? I have made a purchase of port which I should like you to taste. It is *rayther* uncommon.

I am riding at present a pony which is something too slight for me. A friend of Topping's has a cob (warranted sound) rising six year old, and price £20—described as a good trotter and everything about him "in a concatination accordingly". He is in an awfully rough state at this minute, but curry-combable, of course. I should like to know what you say about him. If Topping brought him up to you about 10 or 11 tomorrow morning, would you give me your opinion—inspect and try?

Faithfully always,
CHARLES DICKENS.

I don't care about his being "demnition fast" as long as he can *keep on*.

The next two letters of November, 1845, and January, 1846, refer to perhaps the only enterprise of his life which Dickens undertook and failed in. This was the *Daily News*, of which the first number appeared on the 21st of January, 1846, with Dickens as the first editor. The democratic ideals of the new paper appealed to him, as naturally did the salary of £2000 a year, but his was not the temperament to stand the vexations and high pressure of life on a daily paper and the first of these two letters alludes to financial difficulties which had depressed him and diminished his first ardour before the paper came out. The second letter shows that he was attending to a subject on which he knew everything, that of the ways and means of reporting, and had entered into a working arrangement with Beard's paper.

Devonshire Terrace,
Tuesday, Fourth November, 1845.

There was a failure of a great Broker in the city last night, which so affects two of my principal people that the Paper *cannot be* on any proper footing.

You may conceive that after laying aside all my usual and dear pursuits for this object, I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have been a little shaken for half an hour. But never say die is the Inimitable's motto: and I have already pumped up as much courage as will set me going on my old track, please God, in four and twenty hours.

Offices of "The Daily News",
Whitefriars.
Sixteenth January, 1846.

There is a meeting at Norwich on Tuesday night—a free trade meeting—which has this novelty that Wodehouse (I think that's the way to spell his name: it looks like a Saxon God's) has challenged Cobden to a discussion, and they will go at it like a couple of Crichtons. We are all powerful on that Railway, and mean, if possible to have a special train in which our man or men can come up long before the mail—write out, on the way—and give us his or their couple of columns or so, in time for the first Edition. I don't think we should do this, but for a preliminary splash: and it is possible, therefore, that you may not think it worth while to join. But in the spirit of the alliance I think it right to tell you exactly what we mean to do.

He was not to write many more letters from Fleet Street, for on February 9th, less than three weeks after the first number, he resigned "tired to death and quite worn out" and determined on another sojourn abroad, this time in Switzerland, where he would write another book (*Dombey*) in the old numbers. The next letter is accordingly from Geneva, dated October 21, 1846, and contains one of the most spontaneous and delicious bits of description that he ever wrote:

There are two men standing under the balcony of the hotel in which I am writing, who are really good specimens, and have amused me mightily. An immense Frenchman, with a face like a bright velvet pincushion—and a very little Englishman, whose head comes up to about the middle of the Frenchman's waistcoat. They are travelling together. I saw them at Mont Blanc, months ago. The Englishman can't speak a word of French, but the Frenchman can speak a very little English, with which he helps the Englishman out of abysses and ravines of difficulty. The Englishman, instead of being obliged by this, condescends, good humouredly, to correct the Frenchman's pronunciation—patronizes him—would pat him on the head, if he could reach so high—and screeches at his mistakes. There he is now, staggering over the stones in his little boots, and falling up against a watchmaker's window, in perfect convulsions of joy, because the beaming giant, without whom he couldn't get a single necessity of life, has made some mistake in the English language! I never saw such a fellow. The last time I met them was at the other end of the lake by Chillon, disembarking from the steamer. It is done in little boats: the water being shallow close in shore: and in the confusion, the Giant had got into one boat, and the Dwarf in another. A hairy sailor on board the steamer found the Dwarf's great coat on deck, and gave a great roar to him; upon which the Dwarf, standing up in the boat, cried out (in English), "Put it down. Keep it. I shall be back in an hour". The hairy sailor of course not understanding one word of this, roared again, and shook the coat in the air. "Oh you damned fool!" said the Dwarf (still in English). "Oh you precious jackass! Put it down, will you?" The Giant, perceiving from the other boat what was the matter, cried out to the hairy sailor what it was necessary for him to know, and then called to the Dwarf, "I have tell him to cap it!" I thought the Dwarf would have died with delight. "Oh, my God!" he said to himself. "You're a nice man! Tell him to cap it, have you? Yes. Yes. Ha ha ha!—cap it, indeed! Oh Lord!"—and never left off chuckling till he landed.

Those who know well *Our Mutual Friend* will be reminded of the conversation between Mr. Podsnap and the foreign gentleman. "'The Constitution Britannique', Mr. Podsnap explained as if he were teaching an infant school. 'We say British, but you say Britannique, you know' (forgivingly as if it were not his fault)."

There comes a gap till March, 1848, when Dickens is at home again and bidding Beard to a "solemn Dombey dinner" and three

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

months later there is yet another typically jovial invitation to the seaside.

My dear Mus'r Beard,

We have, for a novelty, fixed as our autumnal abiding-place, on

(I must go over-leaf to write it)

BROADSTAIRS!

—where, in a larger house than usual, is a bed (and bedstead) perpetually at your service, and where you are expected every Saturday for the next eight or ten weeks.

N.B. A boat for Margate every Saturday afternoon, at half past three. On Sunday next, ribs of venison. On Sunday week, a haunch of ditto, just sent up from Northamptonshire.

In a postscript he adds "Poor Fanny still lingers on, to the amazement of all the Doctors and all who see how worn and wasted she is". This was his eldest sister, Mrs. Barnett, a musician. When as a boy he was working in the Blacking Factory he went to see Fanny receive a prize at the Royal Academy of Music and broke into tears at the thought of himself "beyond the reach of all such honourable emulation and success".

Two months later he writes that "poor Fanny is to be buried tomorrow" and adds "I begin to think, like the monk who spoke to Wilkie [Collins] that we are the shadows, and pictures the more robust realities".

(*To be continued*)

Dickens as Titania wooing the "Daily News" as Bottom—a contemporary cartoon in Dickens's ill-starred editorial venture of 1846.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PORTRAIT OF A DISCIPLINED ARTIST

by Harry Salpeter

She has three names. On the croquet field where she invariably misses her turn with the mallet because she *will* exchange a bit of small talk with one of the spectators, I call her "Scatterbrain"—out loud and without feeling the least sense of *lèse-majesté*. In the drawing room she is called Mrs. John Metcalfe, her husband being the English novelist. As the artist, as novelist and poet, she is known to a still larger number, in fact to most informed readers, as Evelyn Scott. She is still so patently the Southern belle, she is so much the animated drawing-room person who can meet the lightest trifler on his own ground, that when I first saw her in that rôle I had to be assured that this was indeed *the* Evelyn Scott, author of *Escapade, The Wave, The Narrow House,* and *A Calendar of Sin.*

So this was she. A small, slight, restless-bodied woman dressed in a black evening gown that turned to lace at throat and sleeves. She stood listening to someone, listening with a large-eyed expectancy that seemed to transform the idlest gossip into momentous matter. And yet despite the warm attentiveness which the social part of her paid to what was being said, one observed her restlessness escaping in little movements, provisional starts to enter the conversation with her own contribution. Even in repose she suggests energies held in nervous reserve. After a hard day's gruelling work writing more than a normal day's instalment of her next novel, she will insist on a three-mile walk when the average woman of her slight build—after having done little more than nothing—would cavil at half a mile. And no matter how exigent the demands of the artist Evelyn Scott on the person Evelyn Scott, she always has a fund of time and energy for reading the scripts of apprentice novelists and story-writers, an inexhaustible hospitality for beginners which dozens of disappointments have not damped. Nor is there anyone more ready to conduct a conversational ascent from gossip to aesthetics and philosophy, the history of morals and the morals of history—which by no means exhausts the range of her information and curiosity.

As discipline for the novelist in her, she has written a number of plays. She has written poetry in order to find immediate discharge for a more overpowering emotion than she experiences normally. In order to re-live her own childhood, she has written one juvenile and collaborated on another. She has studied painting, and done a little, in the hope that she would find in that form of expression a more satisfactory way of saying to the world what she has been trying to say in fiction. Years ago when she was a reader rather than the writer she composed the first part of an aesthetic of criticism; when completed, this will be the philosophical foot-note to the artist that is Evelyn Scott.

There are few subjects of intellectual inquiry alien to her interest and not many aspects of untried experience which she would

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forgo. She is the type of person who appears so fragile and nervous that one would expect her to fly off the handle at the first rude impact, were she not geared to the rails of a life-purpose with a strength the individual borrows from the sturdy artist hidden within the deceptively slight exterior. Had she money in sufficient quantity she would always be travelling. She has the inclinations of an explorer. Recently, after attending an exhibition by a group of Zulus of their native songs and dances, she recalled an old desire to go to South Africa. Readers of *Escapade* are aware that the circumstances under which she "explored" Brazil were anything but those which a well-to-do tourist would select. Only her financial stringency confines her present travels to the triangle formed by New York, London and Santa Fe. She has no home, in the full sense of the word, and wishes for none. New York is her financial headquarters because it is the headquarters of her literary agent and of her publisher; London is the home of her husband and his family, and Santa Fe is where her sixteen-year-old son, Creighton Scott, otherwise known as Jigg, is growing up.

If Evelyn Scott cannot be in all the places in which she would like to be (simultaneously, I fancy) she does manage to range over a vast terrain in the books that others have written. She is generous in her praise of contemporary novelists and poets and story-tellers, and her affection is as wholehearted and as unpredictable as her hate. She maintains a vast correspondence to which she sacrifices her Sundays—days of rest from novel writing. Injustices which others suffer can put her in a passion no less intense than that aroused by those injustices which touch her directly.

There is nothing tepid in her quality. Her compass point makes only sudden veers. Although there are times when she conveys the impression that she was born to be the châtelaine of an estate, the fact is that never at any point of her career has she rested in complacency. Poverty is only one of the reasons. Every book which she has written has helped her to find the right way to write its successor, and she expects to continue learning until the very end. Her plan is to write a *comédie humaine* of the United States, and when one contrasts the fragility of her person with the magnitude of the task she already has completed and the task she is setting herself the idea occurs that she may be the vehicle, the means, of some power outside herself.

Miss Scott was born in Tennessee. When she was very young her family moved to St. Louis, where they remained until she was thirteen, moving thence to New Orleans. Her pleasantly blurred speech indicates her Southern origin. She began to write, she says, not to escape family or environment or any special circumstance, but in order to find release for her overcharged emotionalism, a need she would have felt no matter where she had been born or under what circumstances she had lived. Her family, she tells me, was saturated in bookishness; but that, she explains, is not art. Up to the age of thirteen the two things that were of supreme importance to her were books and the theatre. Her childhood dream of being an actress did not exclude that of being a writer. She had gone so far as to register as a prospective student at a dramatic academy. One suspects, without knowing, that an indignant parent intervened. When it was that she first wrote plays, for themselves and for the technical practice, is not on the records; but her career as a writer began, not at three years of age, as is alleged for some who have felt the call to write, but at the comparatively mature age of seven.

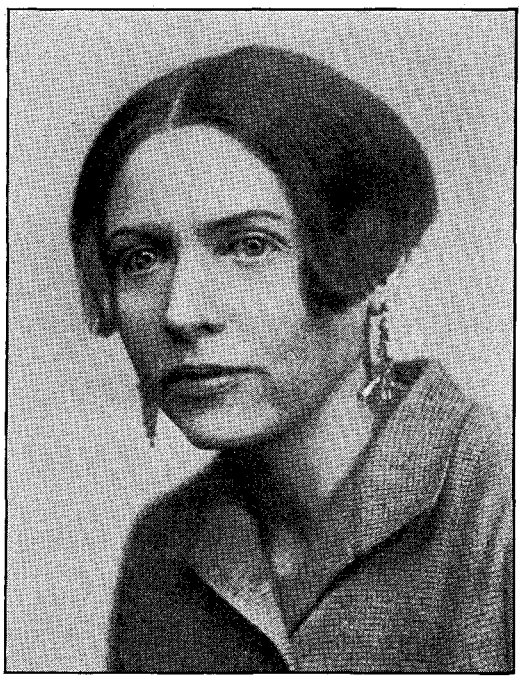
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EVELYN SCOTT

A new photographic portrait.

At that age she produced *The Autobiography of a Book Case* and *Helen's Wonderful Dream*, the latter owing a large debt to *Alice in Wonderland*. Foreshadowing her subsequent development, she refused to rest on her laurels and forged ahead with a fairy-tale called *The Adventures of Philip*, over which she pottered and struggled for a period of five years. She permitted a boy friend to read it and what he told her constituted her first experience of literary criticism. He said, in effect, that she couldn't have written the story because it was too good. Being a sensitive author she brooded for a longer period over this (unintentionally) flattering comment than she has over subsequent adverse comment, although she still takes such comment hard and remembers it longer than it deserves to be remembered. It is, I fear, a permanent defect in her nature that her barbs are particularly sharpened when they are aimed at publishers who do not share her vision and reviewers who fall short in their understanding of her.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



EVELYN SCOTT

A photograph made while she was writing "The Wave".

We may assume that after *The Adventures of Philip* there were further experiments in prose fiction and that the young critic who had sneeringly dismissed that work was not again privileged to read the script of Evelyn Scott. Her first adult work, never published, was a novel written on both sides of the pages of five ledgers. This novel ran away with her and refused to come to an end. She had tried to put her universe into her first book. To train herself toward the disciplining of her impulses she began to study plays and to write them. Of the five thus composed, one was subsequently produced by the Provincetown Theatre under the title of *Love*, a satirical title since the theme of the play was the greed of mother love. The fact that none of the other plays has been, or will be, produced leaves her with no sense of time and energy wasted.

I asked Miss Scott whether she recommended the process of writing plays as a training for young novelists generally. She replied, "Yes—for every young novelist whose expression is overcharged with emotion, as was mine. I believe in discipline although I realize that great things have been done and great things will be done without it". For example, Miss Scott calls *The Narrow House,* her first published book, the most intense she has ever written, but, she continues: "It's fragmentary and it lacks the philosophic content which, I feel, should be in the major novel". In offering advice she does not wish it to be taken as coming from an authority. "I can pretend to know thoroughly only myself, and what I say applies mostly to myself." A wider application is suggested by what she went on to say: "But I don't know anyone whose imagination is more open to identification with other people than mine".

One of the chief impulses of which she is cognizant in herself as artist, the impulse which she strove to rein in by the discipline of play-writing, is to put the whole of herself into each book. In *Migrations, The Wave* and *A Calendar of Sin*, recently published, and in the sum of the three, there is an approach to the organization of a universe; but often she reacts from this ambitious scope and seeks to present themes so slight that the scenes, in contrast with her larger panoramas, become almost microscopic. Today, having finished her trilogy of American life (*Migrations*, the gold rush; *The Wave*, the Civil War; and *A Calendar of Sin*, the Reconstruction period and after, up to 1909) she has reacted to an intimate drama, in which there are but two persons and attention is centred upon but one, the title character, Eva Gay. And from *Eva Gay*, it is not unlikely, will evolve perhaps a trilogy, perhaps a tetralogy, as broad in scope as the trilogy already com-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pleted. There are more worlds in that little head of hers—speaking descriptively—than any dinner-table companion listening to idle chatter could suspect. And those worlds unroll themselves on scrap paper, on the finished manuscript and finally into the book, in an ordered and inevitable sequence.

It is a fact that ever since she began to publish her novels—that is, since *The Narrow House*, in 1921—there has been almost no fumbling in her work, no writing blindly. She has never abandoned anything seriously begun, although there are some tasks which wait for their completion for the return of the right mood and circumstance. She has never failed to know, at the beginning of an enterprise, the approximate end. But, she says, "I am too proud to be vain over the certainty of my direction. My intention is so difficult that there can be no vanity about the result—it is bound to fall short".

I have heard many authors discuss the ways in which they worked; discuss what they call their methods, but not until Miss Scott explained to me the invariable system by which her novels have evolved from the idea to the finished book have I heard of a method that called for such unflinching devotion and industry. I commend her method to the *flâneurs* who regard the writing of novels as a matter of inspiration and easy writing, a casual process by the exercise of which one gains money or prestige. I do not, however, commend it to those who require logical systems or synopses, and certainly not to detective-story writers, the best of whose work is an exercise in logic rather than in creative fiction.

While she is engaged in writing one novel by the method best suited to that form of novel, another novel and the method best suited to its expression come vaguely to her. She does not, however, stop to make notes for the emerging project. She finishes the task before her and, in finishing it, perceives the limitations of the form, and this in turn helps to suggest the form demanded by the new novel. But she does not see clearly what the next work will resemble until the novel in the stocks is out of the way. Having only a vague idea of the form to be used in her new task, she must now embody the idea in characters and scene and movement and relationship. Does she draw up a synopsis and a cast of characters? She does not.

"I see the end of the novel, not the stages. I write a rough draft in which I instruct myself in the stages necessary to achieve the end

An early photograph of Evelyn Scott.

I see. The rough draft is a full book. When I finish it, I throw it away. I feel that the vague conception is theoretic and has to be realized in concrete form; the rough draft teaches me to come to grips with my medium. The draft may be as long as the full novel—it usually is. But it is discarded, never referred to. My vision is clear and I can start

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

absolutely fresh on what is going to be the clear copy of the book. So far as time is concerned, the writing of a rough draft for every novel is a far less wasteful procedure than that involved in making a number of fumbling starts. The preliminary draft gives flesh and blood to characters who up to that point may not be much more than abstractions.

"The continuing discipline of writing full-length rough drafts is necessary, partly as a counter-balance to my tendency to bite off larger chunks of the universe than I can chew. If I were to abandon the preliminary versions, I would be in danger of making all my books on the same pattern, of merely rewriting the same book, and each book is, and presents, a new problem." And in each book, she asserts, she is trying to express a philosophy of life, even though it may be beyond the province of fiction to indicate it. Her philosophy, which, she hastens to add, is not a moral philosophy, is between the lines and does not, so far as she is aware, interfere with the story.

For example, her trilogy was written after she had composed and discarded a rough draft of 2,000 manuscript pages containing 600,000 words and covering the action of all three of the novels, and then three single drafts, each as long as the finished book for which it was to serve as the model. Thus, for *The Wave*, 200,000 words long, a draft of approximately that length had been composed and set aside; *A Calendar of Sin* is 400,000 words in length; its rough-draft predecessor was of equal length, and the same process was followed in *Migrations*, the first of the trilogy. For her other novels a similar process of rehearsal was conducted.

From this habit of work must be excluded, naturally, her books of verse. She has published two books of verse, *Precipitations*, in 1920, preceding her first novel, and *The Winter Alone*, a 1930 publication. "I write poems", she says, "at rare intervals when I am not working on prose. This is partly because the prose frame of mind is inimical to poetry and partly because I feel that the justification for a poem must be immediate and overpowering—at least for me."

Was there anything she had written that she would prefer had not been published; did she, in short, regret anything? "I never regret anything," she replied. "Whatever I've done is a stage toward something else, and writing is the education of the novelist. If I can manage to keep my health I shall write better novels at fifty than I do now."

And what is her great, her all-embracing impersonal aim, as an artist?

"I want to make my own universe recognizable to others; I want to communicate my sense of what life is to me. I don't expect anyone to know what my universe is until I'm dead and it has been completed. One book can be only a partial attempt to create, or express, the universe. There is something in each one of my books that makes it an integral part of the architecture of the whole and even if, at my death, a turret should be missing, you will still be able to get an idea of the general design—at least I hope so."

And the design toward which she is striving, if I may repeat, is that of a *comédie humaine* of America.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM COWPER

BORN 26 NOVEMBER, 1731

by Robert Shafer

COWPER has often been called the poet of a sect—the poet, in fact, of Methodism and of the closely related Evangelical party within the Church of England. Some fifty years ago Goldwin Smith concluded his slight memoir of Cowper with the verdict: "He belongs to a particular religious movement, with the vitality of which the interest of a great part of his works has departed or is departing". And only the other day Lord David Cecil, in setting the scene for his charmingly written book, *The Stricken Deer*, said: "His poems are not much read now. Bound in solid leather, . . . they rest upon the upper shelves of old-fashioned libraries, unread from year's end to year's end. . . . They are become merely furniture. . . . When, on tiptoe, one drags a volume from its place and opens it, *pouf*—the page is clouded for a moment by the shaking out of the dust that has accumulated for so long there. And the words seem dusty and faded as the paper on which they are printed. . . . It seems impossible to believe that this was ever the genuine expression, however formal, of a living person's mind".

But Lord David Cecil had not to read far before discovering that which caused in him a surprised change of mind; and so was he led on to write the best book hitherto published about Cowper. *The Stricken Deer* is a too light-hearted treatment of its subject, but it is a work of real, yet always intelligent and discriminate, devotion. And it must have led more than a few of its many readers to open the pages of Cowper for themselves. To do so, moreover, is much easier than Lord David Cecil would have us believe. For the standard edition of Cowper's *Correspondence* was published as recently as 1904, in four stout volumes. It contained many new letters, though its text is not always accurate, and it was not, as its editor supposed, complete; for additional letters were published almost immediately, and a still further sheaf appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1907. Meanwhile two independent editions of Cowper's poems had been published in 1905. One of these, edited by Mr. J. C. Bailey, is the best we have, or are likely to have in our time. The other, edited by Mr. Humphrey S. Milford, though less useful, is complete and accurate, is more convenient to handle, is excellently printed and bound, and is easily obtainable everywhere at small cost, as it is included in the series of *Standard Authors* published by the Oxford University Press. This volume, too, reached its third edition in 1926, and so proved that Cowper has not lacked, even in very recent years, a considerable body of readers. Mr. Milford also edited in 1921 a small selection from Cowper's poems and letters, and reprinted in the same volume Hazlitt's and Walter Bagehot's essays on Cowper.

This volume, to be sure, which was published in the *Clarendon Press Series*, was intended for the schools, where Cowper still

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

numbers his thousands of enforced readers—a public which must be largely disregarded when we are asking about the continued life of a writer. The book forms, however, a very pleasing introduction to Cowper, as does also the small collection of letters admirably selected by Mr. E. V. Lucas for the Oxford series of *World's Classics*. A fuller selection from the letters, edited by Sir James Frazer, the famous author of *The Golden Bough*, was published in two delightful volumes in 1912.

And if we do not need to seek a dusty volume on the upper shelf of some old-fashioned library in order to read Cowper, neither are we confined, for information about the man, to his early biographers, Hayley and Southey. For his story, or some part of it, has been retold of late years not only by Mr. J. C. Bailey and Sir James Frazer and Lord David Cecil, but by others, all the way from the late Myrtle Reed to Mr. Gamaliel Bradford and Mr. Hugh I'Anson Fausset. Mr. Fausset's pretentious book, which appeared only a couple of years ago, is, to tell the truth, like Myrtle Reed's essay, negligible;—yet both go with the rest to bear witness to a living interest in Cowper which time has not abated.

It is therefore no idle question, of merely antiquarian character, which falls to be asked on the occasion of the bicentenary of Cowper's birth. The man was extraordinary, and his life, by general consent, is memorable. Yet it is a provocative fact that even his truest friends in this long after-day are not a little put to it to explain why his poetry should continue to live. It is indeed obvious to anybody who can read that the writer of *The Diverting History of John Gilpin*, of *The Retired Cat*, of the lines *On the Loss of the Royal George*, and of those other lines *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture Out of Norfolk*—lines which Tennyson confessed that he could scarcely hear without breaking down—was something more, and other, than the poet of a sect. These pieces, with *The Castaway* and several others, securely defy oscitation—to use one of Cowper's few unusual words—and are as little cumbered with perishable matter as any in the language. By themselves, however, these form an exceedingly slender basis for a poet's immortality; and when we look beyond them we begin to encounter difficulties. We find, for example, the *Olney Hymns*—sixty-seven of them—not one of which can be called an excellent poem, though several continue to hold places in modern hymnals. We find, too, the didactic poems which filled the greater part of Cowper's first volume, in 1782. *Table Talk*, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Charity*, and the rest did not please the reviewers of that day, nor have they much pleased others since, outside of the religious groups which, for a time, regarded Cowper as peculiarly their poet. Many, of course, nowadays vehemently deny that didactic verse can be poetry at all. And though the eighteenth century was more favourable to it than any subsequent period has been, Cowper was aware that he was even then laying himself open to objection. In *Table Talk* he spoke of "the sad complaint" that

> Whate'er we write we bring forth nothing new.

He thought it would be something new indeed to write a great religious poem, but did not flatter himself that he was the man to do it, and admitted that, as things were, Sternhold and Hopkins seemed to represent in his eyes the height of poetic achievement. Again, in *Retirement* he complained:

> Luxury gives the mind a childish cast,
> And, while she polishes, perverts the taste;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Habits of close attention, thinking heads,
Become more rare as dissipation spreads,
Till authors hear at length one general cry,
Tickle and entertain us, or we die.

This did not prevent his reviewers from joining in the cry. One of them immediately wrote that the author of *Retirement* "seems to be a man of a sober and religious turn of mind, with a benevolent heart, and a serious wish to inculcate the precepts of morality; he is not, however, possessed of any superior abilities or the power of genius requisite for so arduous an undertaking. . . . He says what is incontrovertible, and what has been said over and over again with much gravity, but says nothing new, sprightly, or entertaining; travelling on a plain, level, flat road, with great composure almost through the whole long and tedious volume, which is little better than a dull sermon in very indifferent verse".

About a century later Goldwin Smith pronounced this decision to be "essentially just", and no later critic has ventured seriously to dispute it. Yet besides the pieces already mentioned Cowper wrote, in the way of original verse, only a number of trifles—the great majority of them in no way remarkable—and *The Task*. *The Task* was instantly popular, upon its publication in 1785, and in fact caused its author to be recognized as the great poet of the age. Cowper's aim in writing it, however, was not different from his aim in writing the earlier didactic poems, and its growth from them can indeed be clearly traced. Hence a considerable portion of the poem consists of long didactic passages; and when these have been dismissed by the modern critic, with apologies for Cowper's persistent aridity, there is not a great deal left to commend except the quality of the blank verse and the passages which evidence the poet's love of rural scenery. In

The Romney portrait in the National Gallery, London.

versifying skill and in descriptive power and in devotion to nature and in humanitarian enthusiasm, however, Cowper was soon eclipsed by the shining lights of English romanticism; so that in the conventional accounts of English poetry his position has dwindled away to one of merely precursory import. He is pointed out to us as one of the harbingers of Wordsworth, of Shelley, and even of Byron, and we are told that his work thus possesses a permanent historical value, which is one way of saying that life has departed from it.

But this, I think, is a demonstrably absurd conclusion, which raises a question about modern criticism rather than about Cowper. His place, certainly, is not amongst the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The three pictures on this page and the next are from Cruikshank's woodcuts to "The Diverting History of John Gilpin".

"The dogs did bark, the children screamed,
Up flew the windows all;
And every soul cried out, Well done!
As loud as he could bawl."

greatest English poets. His is silver verse, not golden. He had not the genius of a Milton or of a Wordsworth, not their intensity, not their power of impassioned thought striking boldly through to new heights of expression. He had not the brilliancy of a Pope, not the exquisite felicity of a Gray or of a Tennyson, not the robust strength of a Jonson or of a Browning. Yet something he had which endeared him to those who knew him when he lived, which penetrates *The Task* and certain of his other pieces, and which continues to make him a poet who is loved while other, greater men may be truly but more distantly admired. What this was, however, it is not easy even for those who feel it to explain, until the historians and doctrinaire critics who have done so much to divorce literature from life are forgotten, at least for the moment, and until Cowper is seen, not against the stream of poetry and of literary theory, but against the broader, deeper stream of life.

His own life was tragic, and ended in darkness through which he was hunted by spiritual hounds. From infancy to eldest age he found the world too much for him, and existence a cruel riddle to which his only answer was terrible. "What can it signify?" were his last earthly words, and one is greatly tempted to give the question a large meaning—to take it as symbolic of the life then ebbing away. For that question pressed upon Cowper's heart and mind through well-nigh all his days, and though it sometimes seemed to slumber, he could never really answer or elude it, until finally it carried him down, like that other "destined wretch" of whom he wrote, the castaway, upon a wild night "washed headlong from on board" Anson's ship.

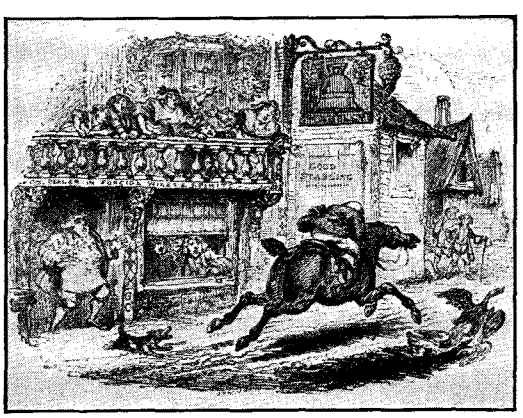
No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

The question was one not peculiar to Cowper. Far otherwise, it was the question which sooner or later confronts every man who comes to know himself. We are all born, by no wish or design of our own, into a world to which we find ourselves at once united and opposed. We become capable of reason, but find our nature rooted in paradox, our destiny obscure, and life an enigma. We are called on by society to perform tasks to which we are not equal; we are carried by circumstances beyond our control into impossible situations; we are forced to choose—when choice of any kind is open—not between good and evil, but between two evils; we learn that worldly success almost invariably has a price which honourable men cannot pay; we learn that even the most fortunate friendship or love gives us only a semblance of that union with our kind which our nature seems to demand—that despite all appear-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ances or pretences each of us must walk alone through an alien world. We snatch at the slightest excuse for being hopeful, but are easily cast down to despair. We imagine that we are or should be self-dependent, but find that by ourselves we are broken reeds. And before all of us stands ever that gateway to which life is but an unescapable approach —death, beyond which we see not, nor hear, nor carry any good things of the earth.

What can it signify? To very many it all appears, so far as one can tell, to signify little enough. "Follow your nose and don't rock the boat" would seem to be the most widely recommended method of crossing the river of life. But in no other sphere, very probably, are appearances so deceptive. Men put their best faces forward, and hide their weakness and despair deeply within themselves. It was so with Cowper; but his effort to conform himself to the ways of the world cost him his sanity. Therein he differed, in all conscience, from the rest of us; and this sad eclipse has quite naturally caused men to set him apart from his kind, and also to divide his life sharply, separating off from the rest his several periods of insanity. Yet to do this is



"Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—here's the house—
They all aloud did cry;
The dinner waits, and we are tired;
Said Gilpin—So am I!"

"I came because your horse would come;
And, if I well forbode,
My hat and wig will soon be here,
They are upon the road."

to resign the possibility of any right understanding of the man. His insanity was real, while it lasted, but it was certainly not the outward mark of a completely divided personality. On the contrary, his life was one, and he was set apart from the rest of us only by a heightened susceptibility and sense of our earthly portion which renders his story, not insignificant or merely curious, but poignant and classically illustrative in its quality. I do not mean to say that there is no residuum of mystery in his case, but it cannot be emphasized too strongly that this is of small importance beside the fact that he was defeated in the struggle of life by an overpowering sense of human weakness and insufficiency and futility which cast him into depths of misery from which no earthly aid could draw him up.

His recovery was effected by the message of Evangelical Christianity, which alone brought him hope, founded on the promise of divine aid. Attempts have been made to explain away this fact, and there have been, of course, and will be, very many to welcome such attempts—but a fact it remains; and it is equally a fact, as Lord David Cecil has

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COWPER, WITH LADY AUSTEN AND MRS. UNWIN, AT OLNEY

From a painting in the Cowper Museum.

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in. . . ."

correctly insisted, that the subsequent years during which Cowper lived in the fulness of Christian hope were the best years of his life. That this hope gradually faded seems to have been due, not so much to the shortcomings of Cowper's spiritual director, though these were serious, as to the rough-and-ready character of Evangelicalism. It was, for the times, an effective instrument of conversion, but it was vitiated by complacent ignorance, and it stood very nearly helpless before the daily problems of the spiritual life on earth. Its Calvinistic theology, too, gave Cowper the basis for his dreadful conviction through his later years that he existed only as an object for God's mockery.

How things might have gone with him under different circumstances it is easy but not useful to conjecture. The important and significant fact is that despite loss of personal hope, Cowper persisted in his Christian belief, and gained therefrom a certain measure of the support he needed, courage to face his situation, and a serious purpose. It is commonly said that what he really sought was distraction, to enable him as much as possible to avoid facing his situation; and in confirmation of this view there is much seeming evidence in his letters. But while Cowper's letters are amongst the most delightful in the language, and by themselves are enough to ensure him the affectionate and grateful

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remembrance of many generations, still, they cannot be used indiscriminately. For the purpose of evidence they cannot properly be used at all except as they are compared with, and corrected by, each other, since Cowper's language about himself not only varied with his moods but with other circumstances. He suited his expressions, in particular, to his correspondents. He was, in addition, the most unassuming and retiring of men, and enjoyed being mildly ironical at his own expense. Finally, when one remembers that some situations can only be faced by methods of indirection, and when one considers what Cowper actually accomplished, I think it must be agreed that the single really tenable conclusion is the one above stated.

For Cowper did not yield supinely to the despair he felt; he did not turn from the God who, as he was persuaded, had turned from him; he did not sink into bitterness, or self-pity, or self-indulgence; and though he could not understand the sorry scheme of things, neither did he allow himself to fall into the flattering delusion that his ill-fate must somehow be the fault of others, of society. Instead, he set about making the best of things as he found them. Calmly, quietly, not without disappointments and reverses, but doggedly, unweariedly, he followed the most likely measures he could discover, or friends could suggest, to preserve his self-possession. Occupation itself was at first the most important thing, but the end sought was the reverse of a life of distraction. It was a well-ordered life, a life of useful occupation, directed to self-cultivation, to the improvement of whatever talent he might find he had, in order that he might thus, if in no other way, fitly honour God according to the capacity bestowed on him, and at the same time serve mankind and himself.

In saying this I but paraphrase certain parts of an almost confessional letter which Cowper wrote in 1786 to his cousin, Lady Hesketh. But in order to understand it fully one must realize that at no time did Cowper believe men should forsake earthly employments and bury their talents to the greater glory of God. In this he was wiser than Evangelicalism, and he did not leave his good sense behind when he entered that fold. He believed, indeed, that the things of our mortal life are of little worth in comparison with immortality; but he also believed that all that exists was created by God for good ends, and that the right life for man as a mortal was not one of ascetic denial, but one of full employment of the fruits of the earth and of our own natural, or bestowed, abilities, to the end that by action and reflection we might bring ourselves to our full height as mortals.

The Task was the memorable result. And it is not forgotten, because Cowper achieved in it a difficult union of just thought and true poetical expression, highly individualized. His life in the village of Olney became a poem, and that life reflected through his developed personality is the substance of *The Task*, and gives it a unity and a completeness—despite its inequalities, its seeming aimlessness, and its variety—which few long poems possess, and which should render it immune from dismemberment and piecemeal rejection or appreciation. As we read it we see gradually revealed a man of tender sensibility and playful humour, happy in country employments, inexhaustibly charmed by rural sounds and scenes, in a land subdued through many generations to human uses—a man not shunning society, not fleeing from civilization, but on the contrary loving the company of a few congenial friends, well-born and cultivated men and women, welcoming all the pleasant refinements of life by which in-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cowper's birthplace, the Rectory House at Berkhamsted, where the poet's childhood was passed.

genuity tempers its rigours, watching with a somewhat troubled delight the activities of the great world, by closest bonds attached to his own land and people, yet for himself wishing to be rather a spectator than an actor in its affairs—devoted, indeed, to modest retirement because it alone affords opportunity for leisurely contemplation, without which no man can hope to attain wisdom.

The picture is unfolded before us in the best way of all. We come to know the man, not merely to hear about him, because we accompany him upon his country walks, seeing through his eyes and hearing with his ears; because we are taken with him into his garden, and on a winter evening into his home, while he reads the newspaper, just arrived from London, to his dear friends, Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austen:

"Time made thee what thou wast, king of the woods." The tree which inspired Cowper's poem "Yardley Oak".

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in. . . .
This folio of four pages, happy work
Which not even critics criticize; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break;
What is it but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the summit, see,
The seals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them. At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dexterous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take;
The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved
To engross a moment's notice, and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness! it claims, at least, this praise;
The dearth of information and good sense
That it foretells us, always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here,
There forests of no meaning spread the page
In which all comprehension wanders lost;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion; roses for the cheeks
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean plundered of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons and city feasts, and favourite airs,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PARLOUR,
COWPER HOUSE

The interior of the portion of Cowper's house occupied by the poet is much the same as it was in his own day. For this picture and several others we are indebted to the London "Bookman".

Æthereal journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katterfelto, with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.

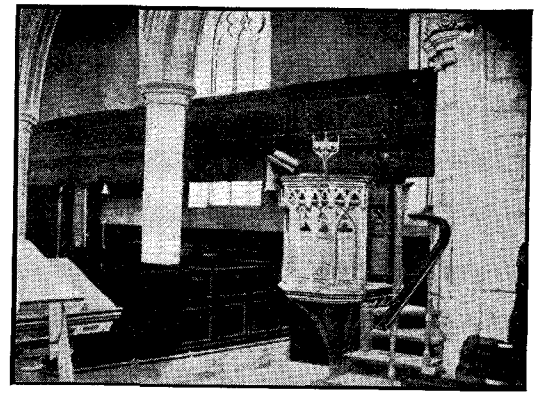
The quiet scene is one of unfading charm; yet the peculiar loveliness of *The Task* arises, not from its pictures themselves as they succeed each other for the eye of the mind, but rather from a felt quality pervading the poem, imparted by the poet's consciousness of the fragility of all human things. "Intimate delights, fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness"—how real, how greatly to be cherished!—Yet these too shall pass in a moment and be no more. Hence, if you are wise, cherish them so only as you may remember that they are for you, not you for them. Use them, let not yourself be used by them. Even the best things of earth may become nets to catch the foolish, though rightly they are precious to the eye of contemplation. And so it is, through the sweetness of Cowper's nature, that detachment itself comes to be the means by which his pictures attain the vividness of life—a detachment gentle, uninsistent, even regretful, but firmly rooted in the felt woe of Cowper's inmost being. And this I take to be the meaning lying behind the verses that Hayley wrote to commemorate his friend, saying that England had learned to value him as one of her dearest sons, yet

> Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
> So clear a title to affection's praise:
> His highest honours to the heart belong;
> His virtues formed the magic of his song.

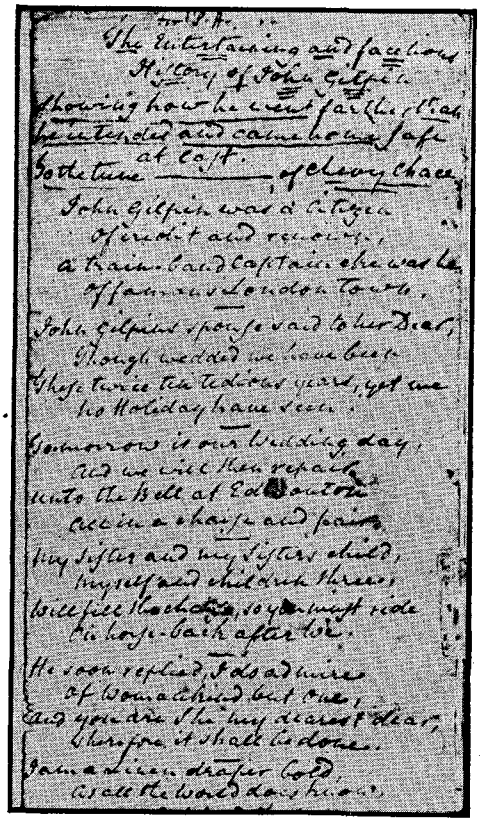
This is the simple truth of the matter; but, as I have said above, *The Task* is memorable for the difficult union effected within it of just thought and true poetical expression. And I cannot help believing that the passage of time will only serve to make more and more clear the greatness of Cowper's achievement in the way of "sense". The man was not capable of profound or systematic thought. As the word is often used, he was not a "thinker" at all. It has been customary to concede that his "criticism of life" is, now at any rate, worthless—a kind of unfortunate aberration. But this is to neglect, impatiently, one of the most valuable of the tasks of criticism, the effort to distinguish, in the literature of a past age, substantial truth from perishable form. Every writer is in some ways the product of his own time and place, speaks its language, has its manners, shares its views; but if his work lives it has that in it

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too which is of no time or place. Cowper's appealing and tender humanity is as manifest to us now as it was to those who read *The Task* in the year of its first publication. And it is certainly time, after more than one revolution of fashion, to recognize that his "sense" is an integral part of his humanity, and that, indeed, his unique fusion of "sense" with feeling is its crown. "Sense", good sense, has long been considered prosaic, and in so far as the eighteenth century was remarkable for good sense it was, as the conventional accounts agree in telling us, an age of prose —prose sometimes disguised by metrical form. There are producible reasons for this view, which has nevertheless its odd aspect, and nobody would deny that Cowper, on occasion, added to the sum of eighteenth-century metrical prose. But it is the special—and perhaps it will come in time to seem the highest—distinction of *The Task* that in it Cowper transmuted much good sense into true poetry.



Cowper's pew in the gallery of Olney Church.



The Entertaining and facetious
History of John Gilpin
Showing how he went farther than he
intended and came home safe
at last.
To the tune of Cherry Chace

John Gilpin was a Citizen
Of credit and renown,
A train-band Captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her Dear,
Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No Holiday have seen.

Tomorrow is our Wedding day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton
All in a chaise and pair.

My Sister and my Sister's child,
Myself and children three,
Will fill the chaise, you may ride
Behind upon the Box.

He soon replied, I do admire
Of Woman-kind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

I am a linen draper bold
As all the world doth know,

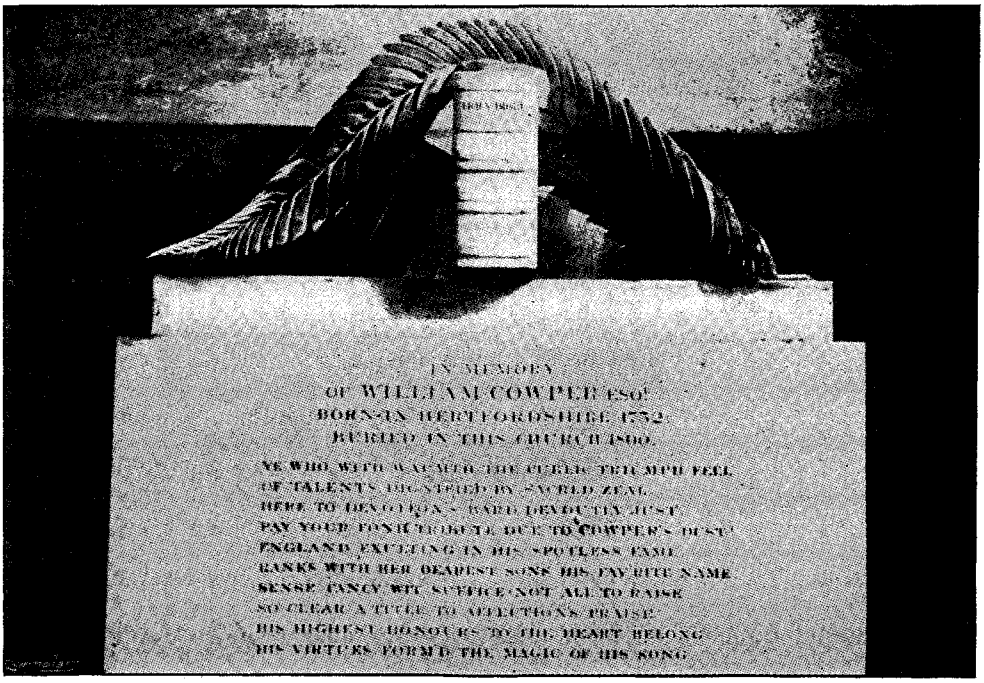
Facsimile of the "John Gilpin" manuscript. Now in the British Museum.

He had no remarkable intellectual powers; he made no fortunate passage through the mazes of abstract thought; he trustingly accepted a crude theology because it happened to come to him along with a message of Christian hope to which his being responded. But when hope fled, and he turned manfully to make the best of what was left, he found ready to his hand an accumulation of traditional good sense, imparted to him by his education and by social experience, and this he proceeded to make his own by actually living in accordance with it. Hence, paradoxically—as it may seem to many despite all possible explanation—a man finally engulfed in darkness, through which he was hunted by spiritual hounds, yet succeeded for a time in maintaining a balanced judgment which gives *The Task* a mellow sanity common in the works of no age and comfortable to humankind in any.

It is not now possible to show at large what this means, but before I make an end I must

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at least mention one important instance. "God made the country, and man made the town", Cowper said, and he so loved the country that he spoke of it, as is well known, in terms practically identical with those which Wordsworth was soon to use. But we do not find in the nature-passages of *The Task* either the exaltation of feeling which Wordsworth ascribed to the influence of natural objects nor the idealization, so-called, of country people and country life which follows in Wordsworth from his devotion to nature. Let any one compare the picture drawn in, for example, Wordsworth's *Michael* with Cowper's description of the Peasant's Nest, and reflections upon it, near the beginning of the first book of *The Task*, and ask himself honestly—not which piece contains the more exalted, more intense poetical expression—but which is the more sane, the truer to human experience, the better guide to thought. The answer cannot be doubtful; and of the attitude towards nature expressed throughout *The Task* it must be said that it is sane, that Cowper is close to the facts and content with them where Wordsworth is strained and doctrinaire, abnormal and false. There are directions, of course, in which Wordsworth leaves Cowper immeasurably behind him, but this is not one of them;—nor is this the only large subject on which Cowper's balanced judgment sheds a steady light, bespeaking the gratitude of decent men.



COWPER'S TOMB AT EAST DEREHAM, IN EAST ANGLIA

"It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying;
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying:
Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence languish;
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her anguish."
—"Cowper's Grave," by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A MONTH OF THE THEATRE

THE NEW GROUP AND OTHERS

by Francis Fergusson

I HASTEN to report, at last, a performance of real importance: Paul Green's *House of Connelly*, as presented by the newly organized Group Theatre. It is important because the author and the assembled actors and directors are trying for something fundamental, something beautiful, careful, conscientious: something worth doing for its own sake. In this they are nearly unique.

Mr. Green's story is the tragic one of the relations between the old South, represented by the dying aristocratic Connellys and the new South, represented by Patsy Tate, a vigorous commoner, whom young Will Connelly finally marries in spite of bitter family opposition, and who then helps him to restore the family's greatness on a new and more democratic basis. A pithy description of this play is going the rounds, to the effect that it kills two birds with one stone, *The Seagull* and *The Wild Duck*; and it is true that Mr. Green has been influenced by his predecessors, especially Chekhov, more in this play than in any other I know—no doubt because of his theme. Of course the collapse of a House, a Tradition, has been *the* tragic theme since the House of Atreus—Chekhov has no monopoly on that—but it remained for Chekhov to realize it again in an unheroic, modern style. This style, complex and naturalistic, more like the *comédie larmoyante* than Aeschylus, fitted the case of so many modern families that it has had numerous imitators, for instance Miss Glaspell with her *Alison's House*, and now Mr. Green with his Connellys. The actual Connelly House (like Alison's) owes something to *The Cherry Orchard*; Uncle Bob Connelly, that intelligent putterer, something to the Chekhov uncles; Mrs. Connelly and her two thwarted but high-minded daughters something to *The Three Sisters*; and many of the actual stage effects—the happy masquerade party of neighbouring vulgarians that breaks in on the dreary Connelly Christmas dinner, resembling the masqueraders' interruption of the three sisters, or the heart-rending departure of the Connelly sisters from their old home, so like the end of *The Cherry Orchard*—are obviously indebted to Chekhov's stage magic.

Of course when it comes to the form of the play as a whole, there can be no question of comparison with the master. Will Connelly marries Patsy Tate with the approval of their author, and the brash, bright, business-like alliance of these two, with its hopes of profit and rejuvenation, sticks out of the melancholy Russian pattern like a bandaged thumb. Chekhov's vision was comparatively whole as well as essentially tragic; the people he knew, the best he could find, were degenerating. Mr. Green's vision, on the other hand, is partial, tentative, hopeful, and not without its sociological axe to grind. But then, it is not Mr. Green's fault that the real decay of the South took place so long ago, and that spiritual changes in this country are

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

likely to go unrealized and unsung until they have ceased to have any vital meaning.

Thus it is evident that Mr. Green's borrowed and rather shaky framework doesn't fit what he has to say any too well: but within it he puts that rarest of all commodities on Broadway, some real poetry. His two negro women, Big Sis and Big Sue—splendidly and subtly played by Fanny de Knight and Rose McClendon—the rather ironic vassals of the Connellys, are poetic creations, in the great line of Elizabethan foreboding underlings: they are more like the soldiers in *Antony and Cleopatra*, foreseeing Antony's downfall, than they are like Chekhov's Ferapont. And Mr. Green's actual language is more racy, more living, richer and deeper than that of any other American playwright except perhaps Lynn Riggs. All of which means that Mr. Green, with his force, his imagination, and his ambitious attack on fundamental themes, is like a refreshing sea breeze in our rather stale theatre.

The production, directed by Lee Strassberg and Cheryl Crawford, is as far beyond most productions as is the play. Months of rehearsal enabled them to weld their company into a real group who know how to play together, getting thus the unity of tone, the sense of time and familiarity which are essential to rendering an old family—and which nobody else in town could hope to achieve. This, of course, is what the Moscow Art Theatre did for Chekhov; the production is full of signs that the directors have studied the work of artists of the Moscow Art Theatre in this country. It is alive in its details, and some of the best performances are those of minor characters, notably Miss Stella Adler's touching Geraldine Connelly and Miss Ruth Nelson's Essie. Anyone interested in the theatre should see this production, which has so many good moments, such tantalizing possibilities, that it is impossible to write of it without trying to compare it with great landmarks in the theatre.

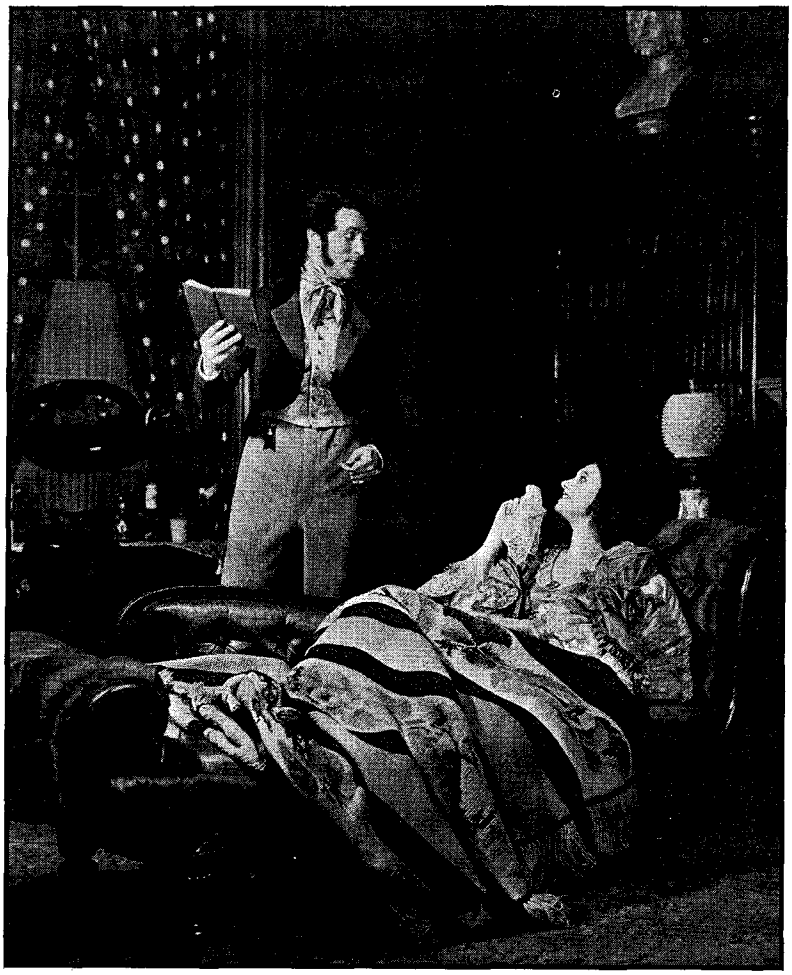
PAUL GREEN

Author of "The House of Connelly".

He

The Theatre Guild (which held the *House of Connelly* for at least a year without producing it, and which is the parent organization of the Group Theatre) did not fare so well with its opening show. *He* was written by Alfred Savoir and adapted and directed by Chester Erskin. Another play of ideas in a very modern French vein, it must have resembled last year's *Siegfried* before it reached Mr. Erskin's hands. The story is about a harmless lunatic in a Swiss hotel who thinks himself God, and his adventures with a visiting society of atheists. For M. Savoir and M. Giraudoux, the author of *Siegfried*, ideas like the idea of divinity have a vitality of their own, a certain lively staginess, like human characters. They represent a new genre, new

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



MISS BARRETT RECEIVES YOUNG MR. BROWNING

A scene from "The Barretts of Wimpole Street", Rudolph Besier's tremendously successful play based on the lives of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, with Katharine Cornell and Brian Aherne in the principal rôles. After an interruption of a few weeks for vacation, the play opens again at the Empire Theatre, New York, this month. The scene represented in the photograph is the dramatization of Browning's famous reply when he was asked the meaning of one of his obscurer poems: "Well, Miss Barrett—when that passage was written only God and Robert Browning understood it. Now only God understands it. What do you say—shall we lighten this great darkness by pitching it on the fire?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to us at least, not profound, but sophisticated and skilful, and their production would depend on the ability to play lightly and ironically with concepts. Since Mr. Erskin did not understand this, it is hard to see why he should have wished to direct *He,* or the Guild to produce it. As they give the play to us, it is so slow, so solemn, so hard-working, that this reviewer was compelled to join a perceptible portion of the audience who walked sadly out after the second act.

Payment Deferred

This thriller, imported with cast intact from England, is about a poisoning, committed before our eyes in the first act, expiated in acts two and three by the poisoner's sufferings, and avenged by the police after the end of the play, as we are told in the epilogue. Like *Grand Hotel,* it has a tabloid mentality plus the relentless devices of modern realism. William Marble, a small bank clerk who resembles H. G. Wells; his nervous daughter, and his faithful, worried wife, are portrayed to the life. None of the all too probable misfortunes that follow Marble's murder of his rich relative are spared us, in all their detailed and painful working out. The point of the evening is the excellent acting of Charles Laughton, who plays the murderer. In his pussyfooting eagerness for his relative's money, in his long pauses while he realizes calamity or plans an evasion, in his struggles with his sedentary fatness when he wants to turn quickly or get up from a chair, in his childish weeping on his wife's thin shoulder, he shows a command of both his body and his emotions, which is the real actor's gift, rare and precious. Cicely Oates as his wife and Elsa Lanchester as his daughter are both subtle psychologists and neat performers, and the rest of the cast, the ugly settings, and the directing, are entirely convincing. Such talents are worthy of better material than sensationalism, entertaining though the result may be to many. It is better than *Grand Hotel* in a similar genre.

The Good Companions

This rather musical comedy, from J. B. Priestley's novel, employs the British virtues of industry and determination to produce jollity. It is the story of various romantically discontented people who run away from home and then all happen to meet in a small town where there is a road company, which they all join. After a few companionable adventures with the road company, and a few marriages, they disband, to live happily ever after. The point is the mild, Dickensian quaintness, the humorous likableness of the companions. Their names convey the flavour: Inigo Jollifant, Fauntley, Susie Dean, The Ginger Policeman: names which mean to me Peg Woffington tea-rooms and tea-cakes at twenty-five cents apiece. The show however is bound to appeal to those who do not find our snappy American musicals harmless enough and would usually rather read Christopher Morley in bed than go to the theatre.

Singin' the Blues

For myself, give me this gaudy-coloured "meller" with music. It "comes off" and convinces at every point where *The Good Companions* can only plead the unexceptionable goodness of its intentions. *The Good Companions* try not to commit themselves, try for whimsy; but *Singin' the Blues* loudly confesses to being a thriller, a murder story, and a Harlem romance, with interludes of jazz and tap dancing, and Miss Isabell Washington moaning the theme song with triumphant and infectious enjoyment. After Jim (Frank Wilson) has committed murder in a Chicago gambling hell, and he and his friend "Potato

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eyes" (Ashley Cooper) have escaped to Harlem, we follow their breathless adventure with the police and the Harlem racketeers, and Jim's romance with a cabaret singer (Isabell Washington). Mr. Oenslager's intensely chromatic settings capture the proper tone, as does the swift, hearty acting. Mr. Frank Wilson is appealing as the hounded killer and he has a nice sense of headline suspense. Miss Washington seems to be able to play a love scene one moment, do a hula-hula the next, and top it all off with a blues song, without for a moment abating her enjoyment or missing her flamboyant style; and Mr. Cooper has a most expressive face, a nice sense of humour, and an infallible sense of timing, which gives a fine laconic effectiveness to the final curtain, when our hero and heroine escape and Mr. Cooper traps the villain, pistol in hand. By not taking itself too seriously, by happily "making believe", this show manages to hit the right style, and is thereby in far better taste than either *Payment Deferred* or *The Good Companions.*

The Left Bank

You are urged to see Mr. Elmer Rice's new play, in this most uneven season, because of the excellent cast and Mr. Rice's good direction, and in spite of Mr. Rice's ideas. Mr. Rice's main idea seems to be that American artists and writers should live at home, instead of on the Left Bank, like John Shelby, his conceited protagonist, well played by Horace Braham. In support of this thesis he shows us not only how conceited and futile Shelby is, but how discontented is his wife, beautifully played by Katherine Alexander. And then he brings on Waldo Lynde (Donald MacDonald) and his wife Susie (Millicent Green). It is obvious from the first that these pairs are going to trade mates, and so, at the end of act three, they do. Katherine Alexander goes home to a sane life with the likable Babbitt, Donald MacDonald, and Horace Braham stays on the debatable Left Bank with the flighty and highbrow Millicent Green.

It is of course evident that Mr. Rice is not dealing with the very real problem that beset Henry James, Hawthorne, Eliot, Pound, Whistler, Sargent and other American artists. What he seems to be trying to do is to say that American writers in Europe are liable to mix up their married relations and become promiscuous; but all of the Left Bank scandals he shows could be matched in plenty of fast business sets in our own suburbs. He seems to say that an American writer, in Paris, is reduced to reviewing and translating to keep alive; but doesn't he know thousands in the same pickle in New York? And if it is a question of "rootlessness", what is more rootless than a New York writer? In short, Mr. Rice has nothing to say about his people that wouldn't be equally true of Americans in many other circumstances; and as for the real differences between this country and Europe, which are essential for understanding the real problem, he never even bothers to ask what they may be.

Nevertheless the cast takes things into its own hands; they believe Mr. Rice's *situations*, where his ideas, and the arguing he makes them do, fail to interest them much. If Mr. Rice had written fewer lines his actors would have given us a most interesting picture of two mismated couples and their efforts to sort themselves out. As it is, their work is very well worth seeing.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ABOUT BOOK-COLLECTING

by Wilfred Partington

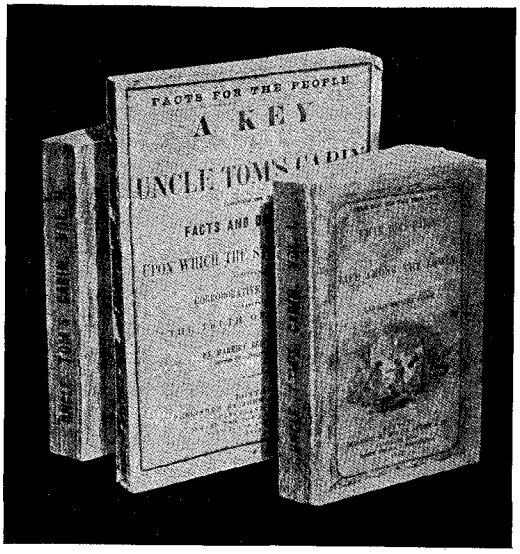
A Bibliomaniac and His Library

London, October.

So long as books are collected so long will there be personal interest in the collectors of them. For your good collector, whose life and work and pains and pleasures are rounded by his voluminous shelves, is a character. He becomes as saturated and as mellow with the wine of his library as old port corks become coloured and ripe in their precious duty of keeping the grape's gentle strength and pleasant bouquet. We all like to read about these old vintage bookmen. The literature is considerable; and I need only mention such examples as the Elton volume in A. W. Pollard's *Books about Books Series*; and Albert Cim's *Les Femmes et les livres* (1919). There is now great concentration on the recording of book-collectors; and the latest and best compilation is the *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts* of Seymour de Ricci (Cambridge University Press: 1930), which sets out the noble list from 1530 to 1930. This infringes our age; but useful as is Mr. de Ricci's *Record*, the time is not yet for dealing with our contemporary collectors, for no age can equal it in variety, personality, and magnitude of achievement.

I have been led to write this End-Paper by the dispersal this season in London of the Library of "the late F. W. Hunt, Esq., formerly of Somerset House"—as the catalogues simply announced him. Behind this statement is the story of as queer a character as any in the curious record of book-collectors—of one who for over a quarter of a century haunted the bookshops and sale-rooms of London. This character is worth a niche in the *Record*; and the successor of Mr. de Ricci, who will be the complete historian of our contemporary collectors, will require to come to the pages of THE BOOKMAN for his materials, since they have not been recorded elsewhere. Some remarkable book-sales are held at the old-established rooms of Messrs. Hodgson and Co., in Chancery Lane, which continue to be—as they have been since Rowlandson caricatured them—a rendezvous for bibliophiles, amateur and professional. It is at these rooms that the library of the late Mr. F. W. Hunt is being dispersed. No doubt some of the spick and span Varsity men who have seen this collector in the rooms have thought him a poor old man who apparently changed his shirt about once a year. They were not to know that he was a Government Servant in a respectable post; and that instead of being a poverty-stricken sale-room

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the "Key", first editions in the original wrappers. One of the scarce items in the library of Paul Hyde Bonner, recently displayed by Duttons, Inc., New York.

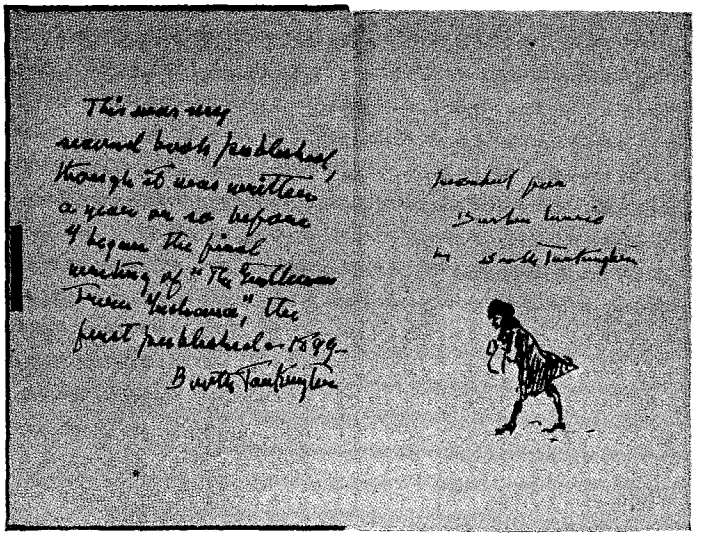
lounger, trying to make an honest shilling by snapping up an unconsidered trifle, he had a considerable house at Chelsea stacked from top to bottom with most expensively bound books. Appearances are deceptive—especially in auction-rooms and bookshops.

But that house in Chelsea, when Hunt came to turn over life's last leaf, beggars description. First of all, Hunt lined every wall of every room with loaded bookshelves. Next, he filled the centers of the rooms with racks full of volumes from floor to ceiling. Then came the deluge: and books were stacked along the corridors, up each side of the stairs, and mighty piles filled the front hall. Certainly there were a few feet of space behind the front door just sufficient for a mat. This, at the end, was the bedroom of F. W. Hunt, Esq., of Somerset House. Here he slept at nights (for want of room elsewhere), his head on the bosom of *Jeanne d'Arc* (by Wallon: red morocco extra, 1876), and his feet on Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Library Edn., 7 vols.). Hunt lived alone, except for an old housekeeper. At first she made the usual feminine resistance against the house being lumbered up with books; her master then had to resort to the usual male strategy. His plan was this. He would buy and buy and buy at the auction-rooms, paying cash immediately but not clearing his purchases until driven to do so by the threats of the long-suffering auctioneers. Then he would hire a cart, collect the accumulated books, and direct the driver to Chelsea. Meanwhile our collector would hurry "home" with beating heart, in order to stop the cart at the corner of the street, where the driver would be given orders to wait until signalled. And then Hunt, with an innocent air, would enter his abode and, giving some money to the housekeeper, would send her on a long fool's errand. No sooner had she turned the corner of the street at the one end than the waiting cart at the other end would be beckoned up. And so another load would be landed. In the end, of course, she surrendered helplessly before the inrush of volumes; and, choked with book-dust, resigned herself to the few square feet of space allowed her in the kitchen. This Government Servant's mania for acquiring books led to trouble at Somerset House, where they also complained of the piled-up volumes under his desk. But he was as imperturbable as Charles Lamb; and the protests were unavailing. So they pensioned him off before he had reached retirement age.

What did Hunt collect? Well, he had a passion for well-bound sets in full or half bindings, with a special preference for red morocco. It mattered not whether they were literary or historical works, in five or fifty volumes; or whether they were a hundred years out-of-date, so long as they were in these fine library bindings. Naturally, many

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of these once-standard but now obsolete sets were acquired cheaply. When the auctioneers' representatives were fighting their way through the stacks of books and dust clouds, they came across an odd bundle of Hunt's book-bills. There were forty of them from one auction-room representing the purchases of a few months. Of the two hundred lots detailed there were not more than a dozen for which he had paid over five dollars. Yet when the library came to be sold, there were plenty of items like *L'Epopée byzantine* (3 vols., half red. mor.) realizing $31; the *Glossarium Eroticum Lingue Latinae* (with six other vols.), $32; and similar at prices up to $100. But apart from these well-bound sets, his library showed a marked partiality for and discrimination in English literature. Such items as Bullen's *English Dramatists*, a clean uncut set; Furness's Variorum Edition of *Shakespeare*; the *Mermaid Series*; J. F. Farmer's various works on Ballads and Songs; Talfourd's *Letters of Charles Lamb* (Ind. Paper); Warton and Hazlitt's *History of English Poetry* (with A. L. s. inserted); Prothero's L. P. edn. of *Byron's Letters and Journals*. All of these he bought at the right time and at prices which were enhanced when the library came to be dispersed. It would seem that Hunt began collecting on a well-defined plan, and as a student; and that his enthusiasm subsequently turned to bibliomania. While collecting on a plan, he was undoubtedly successful. It was when he was unaccountably seized with the extraordinary and insensate passion for acquiring books willy-nilly, that his failure—and probably his unhappiness—began. The moral, of course, hardly needs pointing: indiscriminate book-collecting without purpose or impulse is hopeless. All the same, it is rather late in the day to find a bibliomaniac like F. W. Hunt; and so he has earned his place in the *Record*, close upon the story of the book-omnivorousness of Richard Heber, who however was of a very different vintage.



An inscription that adds greatly to the worth of an immaculate first issue of "Monsieur Beaucaire". From "Fishers of Books" by Barton Currie.

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF W. S. GILBERT

If I were asked what question I should set to secure the longest argument in a debate, one of my suggestions would be: who contributed most to the great success of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas—Gilbert or Sullivan? The problem is the more difficult the

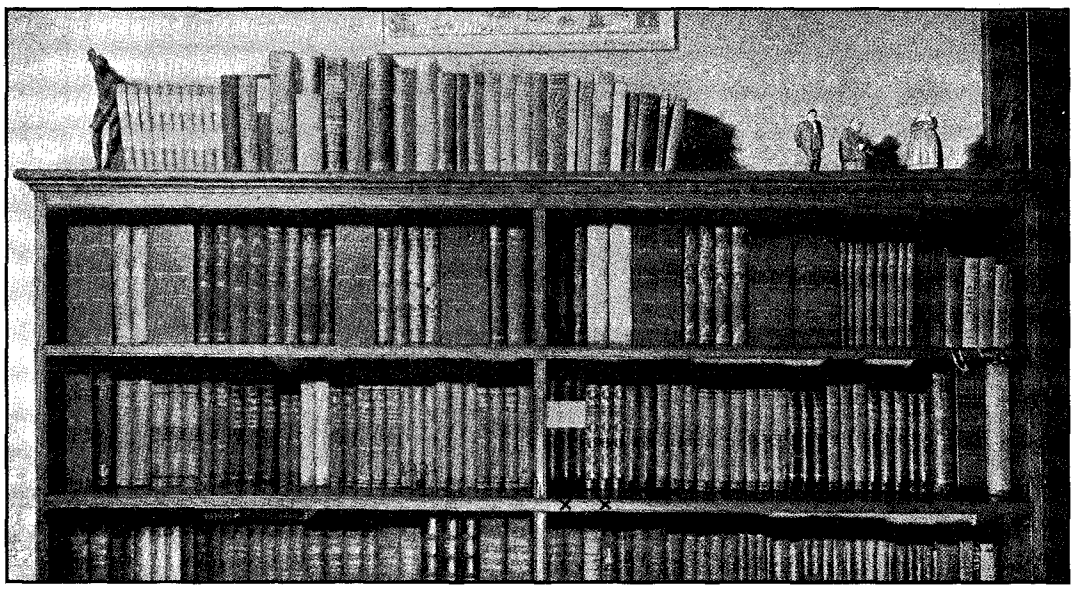
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more it is probed. Whole books have been devoted to it; but I am not aware that the worthy authors have brought us any nearer to the solution. So let us call it fifty-fifty, and be mighty thankful for both G. and S., who were more successful and happy when they were the world's jolliest partners than when they were quarrelling. But what have the twin Gods of the Savoyards to do with book-collecting? That is precisely the question I asked my dog when a weird-looking parcel, laid on my library table, revealed a highly aesthetical, large octavo book, entitled *A Bibliography of Sir William Schwenk Gilbert: with Bibliographical Adventures in the Gilbert & Sullivan Operas*, by Townley Searle. To be frank, it had never occurred to me that there were any collectors of Sir William Schwenk Gilbert's works. But to be equally frank, I now admit to seeing no reason why there should not be. Here are all the circumstances requisite to adventurous collecting—scarcity, variety of issues, and opportunities for cheap acquisition for those who have the patience to examine odd bundles from Victorian scrap-heaps. It will surprise most bookmen to learn that Gilbert's bibliographer in his main section can describe no less than 109 items, beginning with a Play-bill piece *Laughing Song in "Manon Lescaut"* (1857). (How far away it all seems; and yet how near, when we find Columbia University printing in 1916 *A Stage Play* (with Introduction by William Archer)—the first separate publication from Tom Hood's *Comic Annual* of 1873. In addition to the Bibliography proper, there are eleven other sections, devoted to—for example—*Privately-Printed and Advance copies*; *Books illustrated by Gilbert*; *Contributions & fugitive pieces*; and *First edition values*. This handsomely printed work, with its coloured decorations as pretty as the operatic settings, is limited to 300 copies, obtainable—perhaps—from the compiler at 30 Gerrard Street, London, W. I. It opens with a *Caution to American Pirates*—an apparently semi-Gilbertian effort which leaves me mystified; and this is followed by an admirable introduction by Mr. R. E. Swartwout. The Bibliography is somewhat cavalierly compiled; and if Mr. Searle introduces a Gilbertian note into his methods, which are hardly those of our bibliographical societies, he has had exceptional facilities for his work, as may be gathered from his account of privileged visitations to the Lord Chamberlain's vaults, where—amid Victorian dust—he found materials which could have been obtainable nowhere else. But the compiler's adventures were confined by no means to the Lord Chamberlain's vaults: here is part of the notes appended to Item 32 *Pygmalion and Galatea*:

> . . . Samuel French, Limited [publishers of plays] have a beautiful warehouse in the precincts of Covent Garden, the lower floors of which are occupied by a firm of banana importers. (Bananas & Bibliography!) . . . Limited and un-Limited, Samuel French has occupied this warehouse, man and boy, many, many years. Un-Limited, the floors of the building braved the stacks of plays that were forever heaped upon them; but as a company properly limited—well—the floors gave way, and precipitated an unlimited weight of old plays upon the poor inoffensive bananas ripening below. I spent days and days, sliding about over old plays and new bananas; and new plays and old, not to say decaying, bananas. (Although they both begin with a B, bibliography and bananas do not "go"; or if they do, they go bad.)

For all the fun, Mr. Searle's notes and Mr. Swartwout's introduction are contributions of inestimable value to the literature of Gilbert and Sullivan. Only when the Bibliography is consulted can the extraordinary complications

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



TROLLOPE COMPLETE

Eighteen feet of Trollope first editions. From "Fishers of Books" by Barton Currie.

of the libretto editions be appreciated. Most authors' works are well represented in national libraries like the British Museum; but this institution lacks many of Gilbert's items for the reason, it appears (and the explanation comes as a surprise), that the copyright libraries are not entitled to copies of publications sold in theatres. This is in itself a Gilbertian state of affairs; but it further indicates the high value of Mr. Searle's amusing Bibliography, the perusal of which has been a most agreeable task. In fact—

If you're anxious for to shine
In the bibliographic line
To collect our Gilbert fair,
You must look at Townley Searle
(Though away from every girl!)
And know his items rare;
You must look at varied issues
(Till you droop in all your tissues!)
In this complicated work defined:
The fun, it does not matter;
It is only idle chatter,
Of a Will-Schwenk-Gilbert kind.
For every one will say,
As you fill your bookshelves gay:
If this compiler writes his book in terms so light and free;
Why, what a very happy bibliographer this Townley Searle must be.

And lilting my parody of Bunthorne's first song in *Patience*, I must drop the curtain on this note and Mr. Searle's *Bibliography of Sir William Schwenk Gilbert*.

LEIGH HUNT STALWARTS

During recent years Leigh Hunt has been slowly but steadily coming into favour among collectors; and during the same time, also, he has emerged from the cloud which for a long period cast its shadow over his literary and personal reputation. But then, his "Cockney" school has taken a good deal of sorting out; and I am by no means sure that complete justice has been done all round even yet. This is, however, too wide a divergence for a note: so to Hunt. There are three men to

(*Continued on page ix, rear advertising section.*)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From "Snippy and Snappy" by Wanda Gag (Coward-McCann).

TEN YEARS OF THE NEWBERY MEDAL

by Sophie L. Goldsmith

WHEN, on June 23rd, 1931, Elizabeth Coatsworth received the John Newbery Medal, awarded annually for the most distinguished book of that year for children, the presentation marked the tenth occasion of an event which has deepened in importance throughout the decade. There is nothing new about a literary contest; there is nothing new about a juvenile literary contest. The publishing firms of Harpers, Little Brown, and Longmans Green have held them also during this period. Yet the high standards and scholarly aura of the Newbery Medal Contest have raised it in interest and influence above every other event of its kind. An award which is to be bestowed upon "an original and creative piece of work, the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children, original in conception, fine in workmanship and artistically true", arouses the keenest expectations.

The idea of an "anniversary", when shorn of its unfortunate connotation of long speeches and back-patting, really has a good deal in its favour. Rightly interpreted, it is a reminder that, although laurels may have been won, they require constant tending. On such an occasion it seems natural not only to review the original conditions under which an undertaking came into being, but to record its growth and to forecast its future development. The more signal the undertaking, the more likely it is to attract interpreters and onlookers; and, almost before one realizes it, the thing has grown so that its own founders must become re-acquainted with it. A little club becomes a "settlement", a married couple either a horrible example or a museum piece, a band of thoughtful people a "movement". In just such a way has the idea of the Newbery Medal proved so broad in its appeal during the first ten years of its life that its award is of deep interest to an audience whose constantly growing and changing personnel is always bringing fresh aspects into view. The conclusion of the decade makes it appropriate to review the conditions under which the prize is granted, to refresh our memories of the books which have won this dearly prized award, and to speculate on its possible future.

It will scarcely be necessary to recall to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

readers of this article the well known and beloved figure of John Newbery, the English bookseller who so ingeniously combined the publishing of books for children with the selling of patent medicines. He was probably the first bookseller who might have written a book called *The Publisher Looks at Literature and Medicine*. Many of us have dreamed about that eighteenth-century bookshop of St. Paul's churchyard and about the warm-hearted, imaginative proprietor—he who introduced Mother Goose to a world which had in some unaccountable manner existed without her until Newbery garnered her undying philosophies from various English "nannies"; he who bribed none less than Oliver Goldsmith with a guinea at a time to spin some of those quaint tales the possession of which is now the pride of only the most privileged collectors. It was entirely fitting that another lover of children's books, Mr. Frederic Melcher, should, over one hundred and sixty years later, name in honour of John Newbery the award we are now considering. One has only to see Mr. Melcher reverently extract from his files a letter from one of John Newbery's descendants, a letter which has as headpiece a cut of that old bookshop, to realize that the award could not possibly have been named differently.

Besides the condition as to the "original creative piece of work" already cited, further stipulations are that "the author shall be a citizen or resident of the United States. Someone living here temporarily is not eligible. . . . The book need not be written solely for children . . . the John Newbery award is determined by a special committee consisting of the officers of the Section for Library Work for Children and the Retiring Chairman; plus all members of the Book Evaluation Committee, the Chairman of the Book Production Committee, the Chairman of the Committee on Professional Training, and three members at large elected at the annual meeting. This makes a Newbery Medal Committee of fifteen".

These are, briefly, the requirements and conditions. It is significant that the award

Drawing by Erick Berry, from "The Spindle Imp" by Alida Sims Malkus (Harcourt, Brace).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

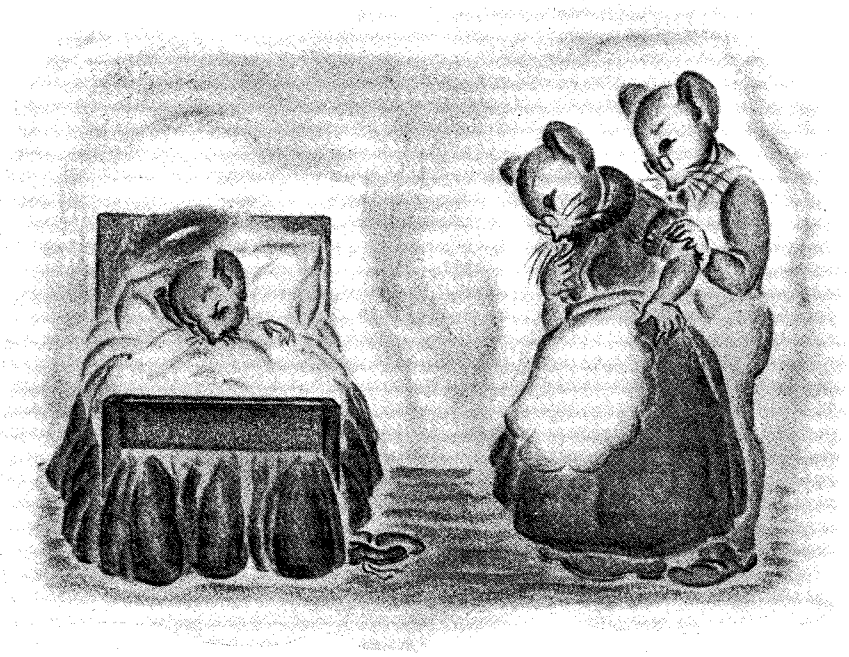
From "Robbers in the Garden" by Marion Bullard; illustrated by the author (Dutton).

of the medal lies almost entirely in the hands of librarians, and immensely heartening to those many among us who find the guidance and the counsel of librarians beyond any words inspiring—indeed indispensable. Their experience with and supervision of children are invaluable. They answer the questions and satisfy the requirements of children of all ages, and thus come into direct and constant contact with them. One must bear in mind that the majority of children who so eagerly seek their advice are potential bookworms. They gravitate irresistibly toward the library, and with eagerness and docility embrace a point of view toward which they are already inclined. So that the selections and recommendations of librarians represent a mature and a literary point of view of a comparatively small, though powerful, number of the nation's young readers. The Newbery Medal Committee, chosen from that group in the American Library Association known as the Section for Library Work with Children, is, therefore, in a position not only to judge the actual reading interests of children, but to make these as broad and fine as possible. It seems to me that no greater compliment could be paid and no more vital responsibility be exacted. How have they met so stimulating a challenge? A brief survey of the books which have won the award to date will help us to draw our conclusions.

The most recent award—*The Cat Who Went to Heaven* by Elizabeth Coatsworth—is the third animal story to receive it. Preceding it have been *Smoky* by Will James (1926), and *Gay-Neck* by Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1927). Smoky was a horse, Gay-Neck a pigeon, and Good Fortune, the heroine of Miss Coatsworth's book, a cat. Smoky's story, told in breezy cowboy vernacular, transports us with great success to rolling Western prairies. We see Smoky during his wobbly-kneed babyhood, we follow the really beautiful idyll of his training by a cowboy, the many bad half-hours with the horse-thief which transform him from a noble-spirited pony to the terror of the rodeo-riders, and his eventual return to the cowboy. It is a

From "A Head for Happy" by Helen Sewell; with lithographs by the author (Macmillan).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



From "The Meddlesome Mouse" by Vera Neville; illustrated by the author (Macmillan).

story full of a healthy young animal's joy in living, of his responses to elemental forces in nature and in man, of an aspect of purely American life which is of perpetual and deserved interest.

Gay-Neck, on the other hand, wings his way through Mr. Mukerji's story in that atmosphere of India's mysticism and idealism which this author always conveys, in the most exquisite of transmutations, to his American audiences. *Gay-Neck* is the one book in the ten of the Newbery Medal's company whose pages touch upon the Great War. The war is not what remains in the reader's mind, but the fact that Gay-Neck is healed of the fear-scars of that shattering experience through the force of the Lama. Although *Gay-Neck*, like *Smoky*, is an absorbing narrative of an animal's life, the emphasis is placed upon the spiritual appeal of the various incidents presented, not on the incidents themselves. The hawk which carries off Gay-Neck is as sinister as the horse-thief who captures Smoky, yet the thrill of his exploit lies not in that of capture and rescue but in the sense that evil has been defeated, and that its victim has been able to fight through triumphantly.

The Cat Who Went to Heaven makes still another appeal. Good Fortune, on her tiny white paws, purrs out a subtle tale of phantasy. Her Japanese master is painting for Buddha's temple a large picture, depicting Buddha and all the animals he has blessed. Good Fortune shares with her master the agonies of artistic creation, living with him the legend of each animal as he paints it, waiting patiently for her place in the painting. But the artist does not intend to admit her to the company of the painted animals, because the cat is accursed of Buddha, having offended him in a previous existence. Although Smoky, for all his human traits, is every inch a horse, and Gay-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From "The Lion-Hearted Kitten", written and illustrated by Peggy Bacon (Macmillan).

Neck's pigeonhood shines through many of his ecstatic flights and his terrified cowering, Good Fortune is not a cat—she is the means of presenting a beautiful idea, religious and spiritual in its significance and not easy to grasp for the majority of children. To what extent Miss Coatsworth's fine craftsmanship will enable them to do so remains to be seen.

Two folklore and two adventure stories have also received the Newbery award. *Tales from Silver Lands* by Charles J. Finger (1924) and *Shen of the Sea* by Arthur Chrisman (1925), give the children rich and original additions to the field of folklore. *Tales from Silver Lands* gives us striking drama, colour, and glowing beauty in its South American settings. Doubtless the novelty of its locale has endeared it to many, but as folklore it has of course many powerful rivals. *Shen of the Sea* boasts a collection of the most engagingly funny Chinamen who ever spun yarns to explain hitherto misunderstood subjects. Whether they are proving that printing could never have existed had it not been for a spoiled child and a jam-coated plaque thrown against a wall, or explaining the secret of imprisoning djinns, or revealing why Chinese eat with chopsticks, their sparkling humour and their crisply quaint turns of speech win them the affection of readers of every age.

In the same category of infectious merriment comes *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* by Hugh Lofting (1922). This is a book that defies classification. It is an animal book and yet it could not by any possibility be grouped with *Smoky* or *Gay-Neck* or *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*. The gloriously impractical little doctor with his hordes of animal patients has convulsed so many of us that he surely requires no comment. He has had time since 1922 to earn an enormous and justified popularity. So, also, has Hendrik van Loon's *The Story of Mankind*, published in 1921 and the first book to receive the medal. It is amusing now to recall the sensation created by this book, which appeared before history was acknowledged to be a truth not only as strange as fiction, but, if handled properly, as fascinating and as popular. *The Story of Mankind* was the first book of its kind to be presented to children, and the first attempt that had been made to display history as a gorgeous tapestry whose figures bore intimate relation to one another rather than as a series of paintings separated by framing and wall-space.

There remain two adventure books in the Newbery Medal series, *The Dark Frigate* by Charles Boardman Hawes (1923) and *The Trumpeter of Krakow* by Eric P. Kelly (1928); and one doll story, *Hitty: Her First Hundred Years*, by Rachel Field (1929). *The Dark Frigate* is the kind of tale many an author longs to write at one time or another, a kind which is frequently attempted and which rarely achieves a lasting success. Not

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

often is a ship given the vitality of *The Rose of Devon*. Not often are kidnappings, enmities, piracies and bloody adventure presented with the literary authority, the convincing drama, of this book. Its dignity and an indefinable noble quality about it raise the standard of adventure books so high that it is hardly surprising if *The Trumpeter of Krakow* does not measure up to it. As in the case of *Tales from Silver Lands,* it is probable that the novelty of the setting was an important factor in its selection. Poland was not a familiar background to American children, and the idea of the young trumpeter whose musical messages sounded security or disaster to his people is instinct with Polish poetry and idealism. Unfortunately the book does not appear, in the opinion of the present writer, to live up to its conception. It is a good adventure story; but between a good adventure story and a Newbery Medal adventure story, the distance is great. Only in its setting and in its inspiringly original idea does the book seem to rise superior to the mass of similar books issued annually.

Hitty, the tiny doll who takes her quill in an extremely capable hand to retail adventures spanning a period of a hundred years, is as elusive in regard to classification as is Dr. Dolittle. She is a doll, it is true, but she is certainly not the kind of doll Sara Crewe choked over in a certain London attic. Her literary owners will never sob to her, as Sara did to poor Em'ly—"You are nothing but a doll! Nothing but a doll—doll—doll! You are stuffed with sawdust! You never had a heart. Nothing could ever make you feel. You are a *doll*!" A creation such as cosmopolitan Hitty, who has in her day played parts varying from snake-charmer's assistant and tropical idol to near-victim of a New Year's Day bonfire, not to speak of various sojourns in the muddy bottom of the Mississippi River, in the horsehair embrace of a Colonial sofa, and in a fragrant hayloft, is a doll only in form. In essence and achievement she is a person, and one whose appearance on the American literary scene is something to be grateful for.

Such have been the winning books during a decade of careful research and of endless weeding-out. Place them on your bookshelves or those of your children; pick them up now and then, love them and laugh over

Photograph by Edward Steichen, from "The Second Picture Book" by Mary Steichen Martin (Harcourt, Brace).

them, use them for different moods, fall under their undeniable spell—the ten ought to be able to answer a variety of those intangible demands only satisfied by the right kind of book. Do they, completely?

Glancing once more at the conditions of the award, two sentences seem to stand out. The first: "The author shall be a citizen or resident of the United States". The second: "The book need not be written solely for children". With no desire to read anything

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

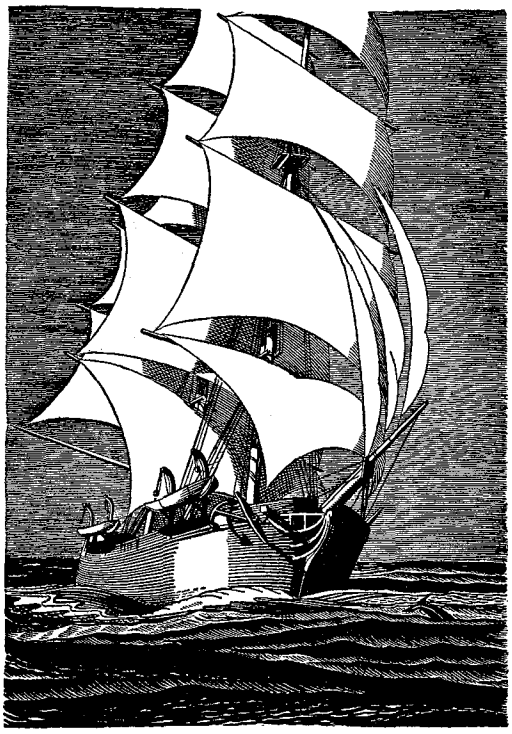


Illustration by Rockwell Kent, from "Moby Dick" by Herman Melville (Random House).

into the first of these conditions excepting that a truly American children's classic may eventually be forthcoming, and without being, we trust, unduly provincial, it seems not too much to hope that future selections may alight on books which give children conceptions of their own country as unmistakably native in flavour as does much adult fiction. With the exception of *Smoky*, which gives us the modern prairie West, and *Hitty*, in which there are engaging glimpses of different parts of America, the scenes of the Newbery Medal books are laid in Mexico, China, India, Poland, Japan. Thus far American writers for children seem to have derived their most effective inspirations from foreign countries. Is it not time to search for one drawing its scenes and its characters from an area no less teeming with possibilities and of far more immediate interest?

Not only has America itself been, comparatively speaking, in the background, but there is scarcely a single instance in the Newbery Medal Award of an effort to interpret some phase of the last ten years, or even the last twenty or thirty—again excepting *Smoky* and *Hitty*. Smoky's story is that of his own time, undeniably; Hitty makes a few of her last appearances in a modern antique shop, although in every composed and aristocratic fibre she herself remains a lady of the old school; Gay-Neck flutters for a few powerful chapters through the acrid smoke of the Great War. Yet, though we join Clarissa and Little Thankful of a hundred years ago at work and at play, though we consort with much pleasure and profit with the mythical Good Fortune, with fantastic witches and with the ageless Dr. Dolittle, we do not meet a single girl or boy who has played our own games, begun to grow up under our own difficulties, or experienced those little triumphs whose recitals are so absorbing.

Apparently the award winners have echoed Charles Lamb's apostrophe to antiquity—the one which begins "Antiquity! thou wondrous charm, what art thou? that, being nothing, art everything! When thou *wert*, thou wert nothing, but hadst a remoter *antiquity*, as thou calledst it, to look back to with blind veneration; thou thyself being to thyself flat, jejune, *modern*!" No matter how inspiriting are the miaowings and the miracles, or how vivid the billowing pirate-craft, many of us look forward eagerly to the arrival on the Newbery Medal scene of a junior Willa Cather, let us say, or of an Edna Ferber, aware of the narrative qualities of this twentieth century and able to translate them into terms suitable and welcome to an audience of children.

Each of us has at least one and usually more books which flash across our minds

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the phrase "children's books". Some of us revert at once to the days when *Mother Goose* or fairy tales reigned supreme; for others there are joyous chuckles at the memory of the Peterkin family or Milne's poems or Sandburg's nonsense; into still other minds come the days of Louisa Alcott's domination or that of Charles Boardman Hawes. For each one of us the wonder and beings similar to himself"; so that we may in all fairness ask whether those supreme experiences with books which are the birthright of all children are so universally connected with the past, the fantastic, the foreign, that when it comes our turn to write or to select such a book, we ought to reject contemporary life and contemporary experiences.

If so, then even the fact that the Newbery

Illustration by Phyl Reade, from "No. 9 Joy Street" (Appleton).

the joy of childhood seem to be caught by a different kind of book. There has been one supreme experience, or a number of outstanding ones, so unmistakably crystallized within enchanted pages that those pages and no others lie open before us when we think about "children's books". So astute an observer of children as Katherine Lord of Nantucket's Little Book House has observed in a recent article, "The usual child wants a story that has some relation to the real life he knows", a book which has "to a degree his own viewpoint, dealing with

Medal books "need not be written solely for children" will not help to broaden the scope of the award. But if it is the experience of people in close touch with the reading requirements of children that they demand the stimulus of their own time, or at least of periods not invariably long before their own time, then perhaps the solution lies in taking advantage of that clause, and combing the annual adult output for the needed material. I am well aware that this is not only an arduous undertaking but that it has, in a way, been attempted, although not in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

connection with the Newbery Medal. When, for example, *Carmella Commands* by Walter S. Ball received the Harper award in its juvenile competition a few years ago, it was a well known fact that the book had not originally been intended as a children's book.

There has been, that is to say, a recognition from other sources (for there have been examples beside that of *Carmella Commands*) of an adult book of today which has attempted to meet an existing need in the children's world. The need has not, however, been satisfied. What queer quirk in the make-up of authors leads them to respond only partially? The fault cannot lie with the publishers—assuredly they do not turn a deaf ear to tales which do not feature clanking coats of mail or the whir of the spinning wheel. Recent "picture books", whose photographed subjects are all too reminiscent of *Saturday Evening Post* advertising spreads, volume after volume giving every angle of the machine age, from aeroplanes and railroad trains to endless boarding-school and athletic stories, attest to their recognition that the need exists. Yet it is apparently met imperfectly. The finest work and most of the inspired ideas are turned in other directions.

It may be, of course, that the method I have suggested, of drafting books primarily written for adults, would not accomplish the purpose, although it is probably more feasible than the more drastic procedure of altering the wording of the requirements and withholding the prize for a year if a suitable book should not come to hand. Perhaps nothing more would be required than for the sponsors of the prize to indicate their preference for the neglected field (if only temporarily). But however it might be accomplished, it would indeed be a privilege to watch the devoted scouts of the Newbery Medal Committee, so distinguished and so eminently capable of the work in hand, adding the touch of perfection to their long series of laudable selections by finding for their accolade books which can give children not only great pleasure but that keenest delight accompanied by increased insight into the world about them that can only come from literature against the background of their own day.

Illustration by Lisl Hummel, from "When Abigail was Seven" by Eliza Orne White (Houghton Mifflin).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE DECLINE OF NICE PEOPLE

by Marian Castle

WHAT has become of the good old middle class these days? I accept the fact that Russia recognizes the existence only of the proletariat, and face-cream advertisers only of the peerage. But surely there's still a place for the middle class in literature!

I have searched through volume after volume of recent compilations of short stories, most of which purport to be either a "cross-section of American life", or "highlights on the American scene". But not a member of the upper bourgeoisie can I find in any of them.

Yet statistics show that out of the 4,034,072 Americans filing income tax returns there were over three mil— Oh, I never did have a head for figures. Anyhow, the big majority of them were in the class that has to decide whether to have Junior's teeth straightened this year, or pay that alumni pledge instead.

Think of it! Millions and millions of Nice People. People who own tuxedos and mortgaged bungalows and butter-spreaders and half-Morocco encyclopedias. And apparently not an ounce of Drama in the whole kit and boodle of them. It's heart-breaking.

"Prize" stories, I thought hopefully as I settled down recently for a snug evening with one of the best known collections. Perhaps here—at last—I should find what I had been looking for. Stories about good old salt-of-the-earth folks like you and me; except that exciting, glamorous, hair-raising, or tragic things would happen to them.

Ah, dear reader, little did I dream . . .

The first story was all about a gentleman named Pinky or something. It opened with his buying lavender silk underwear out of the wages from his latest murder. It closed with machine-gun bullets perforating the lavender silk underwear—and likewise our hero Pinky, or whatever his name was.

I gasped. I did not doubt that it was a very well written story. But, after all, I knew so few Pinkys in my circle, and cared even less for what happened to those I did know. Well, I'd try the next.

It was equally well told. All about a nice, ethical, high-principled, virtuous harlot with biceps who showed up all the so-called religious folks in her town.

I sighed. Not that I minded the so-called religious folks being shown up. It was simply that, try as I would, I just couldn't feel that the saga of this high-minded prostitute touched my life in any way.

Surely the next one—. There must be some folks like you and me whose lives would make good story material.

Presently I was lost in a mystical maze of organ notes and processionals as a beautiful young girl was about to take her final vows as a nun. A handsome, stalwart youth sat awaiting the event in the chapel pew. Ah—drama! He would rise up and stop it. Life, young love, would intervene.

But the young man was only her brother, and he didn't rise up and stop it. And that was that.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I perked up a bit over the story that followed. The scene was laid at an inquest. Now, I assured myself, we'd have something exciting. And then it turned out that the story was all about a couple of vaudeville dwarfs who had committed suicide or homicide or something because one of them thought he had grown a quarter of an inch and . . .

The next story was crammed with "hyars" and "shos" and "haids". It seemed that two pairs of more-or-less-married coloured gentry had exchanged spouses without benefit of clergy or jeweller.

Ho-hum! Well, I wouldn't give up yet.

Presently I was floundering about in the psychological swamps of a dual-personality story about a good little girl and a bad little girl—or maybe the bad little girl was the other half of the good little girl. And finally the good little girl grew up and had another good little girl, and this good little girl also proved to be a bad little girl—. Well, finish it yourself.

I had a shuddery half-hour trailing three fugitive criminals across the desert and watching them being meticulously and inevitably killed by the very forms of execution which they most dreaded.

Perhaps my life had been especially commonplace and limited, I decided. Maybe the world *was* largely populated with gangsters and harlots and nuns and psychopathic cases. But, no, statistics—ah, comforting statistics—had proved that America was made up mostly of folks like you and me; for good or ill.

Surely this time! But the next story concerned the revenges of a somewhat wrinkled-skinned lady elephant. I turned the page.

At last I had found what I was looking for. Nice, pleasant, middle-class people. Charming Southerners. Young love.

But the hero of the tale, instead of reaping a fortune in the circus, had the lack of acumen to commit suicide. And all because he possessed that unique faculty of glowing from head to foot like a watch-dial in the dark. And one day he discovered that his sweetheart did not really care about the idea of an incandescent mate . . .

Despair clutched my spirit. It was getting hopeless. For next there was a story about a Spanish matron who saved the life of the hero by rising in smoke from the top of a upas tree and frightening away the natives.

And then there was a tale about a very young college youth who ruined an equally young working girl, and promised, very bored, to arrange the abortion for her.

There followed the heart-aches of a lady lion-tamer. Of a hardware drummer. The rape of a Bolivian servant girl. The life-story of a gargantuan Dutch bakery owner, female. More "dunnos" and "how-comes" and "chiles", relating to a small boy, coloured. The amours of the wife of a lobster-gatherer and the unsolved murder of her lover. Another story of "whuf-fohs" and "hebbens" and "Buckras". The quest of an advertising man among the Four Hundred for razor testimonials. And last, the story of a Scandinavian nurse who quite humanely murdered a round score of her patients.

All were artistic stories, beautifully told. And nearly every one was about a character either exotic or abnormal. Not one single picture of nice, upper middle-class people who covet (but rarely steal) their neighbours' iris bulbs and wives and housemaids. People who hate (but rarely destroy) their neighbours' radios and house-cats and offspring.

Stories *are* written about run-of-the-mill folks like you and me. Why, then, aren't they chosen for prize collections? Are the poor judges so weary from their toil that

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only the startling and bizarre can shock their jaded attention?

Is the best always the weird and the unusual? Has normality no fiction appeal?

If all judges acted upon this basis, at Better Babies contests the ribbons would be pinned (or are they glued?) only upon Siamese twins or infants with six fingers and cleft palates. The other babies would be esteemed too ordinary. At stock shows only the two-headed calf and the three-legged Plymouth Rock could win a prize. The rest would be judged too monotonous.

But, after all, who am I to have opinions? I am confessedly only a middle-class reader of middle-class intelligence. These compilations were made by the cognoscenti from among the works of the literati. And between them—cognoscenti and literati—it has only too obviously been decided that there is, indeed, no drama in the lives of Nice People.

I see now that the fault lies with me. My horizon has been too limited, my experience too narrow. For in sophomore English earnest instructors assured us that the best writing is always done by those authors who write about the things they know best. So one is forced to conclude that prize story writers must live extraordinarily colourful lives. That they must know intimately a vast number of odd things—and people.

So if some one will kindly send me the addresses of a few racketeers and ladies of light virtue and lion-tamers and gentlemen with Mazda complexions, I will do my best to prepare myself for next year's collections of prize stories.

Fiction is so broadening!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW BOOKS

I WENT TO RUSSIA *by Liam O'Flaherty* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

ACCENT should fall on the subject of this title, rather than on the predicate. Our attention is focused throughout, not upon Russia but in the frankest way possible upon Liam O'Flaherty. We wait, during his train-ride from Leningrad to Moscow, for the two Soviet officials to finish talking, so that he may tell them about the new régime. The explanation of this is not conceit, however. It is simply that Mr. O'Flaherty is a novelist and can only perceive the significance of things in terms of himself. Thus the basis of his difference with Communism, the reason why he cannot subscribe to it with the religious zeal of Russians and Jews, why he never really takes it seriously at all, goes back to an intuitive moment off the coast of Norway, before he has even reached Russia, when it flashes upon him that his heart is not with the "fanatics" who would spread "milky gospels of human brotherhood" but with the Vikings, the "savage plunderers", with "beautiful insanity". This obviously is not a citizen for the new state but a wilful and wild-hearted Gael, lover of horse-racing, women, liquor, fighting, beauty, adventure. And his book is not a book of travel or politics, but a subjective novel with Russia as its incidental topic. ("At the moment, two kinds of books are in fashion, autobiographies and books about the Bolsheviks. . . . I write [this book] for the sole purpose of making some money.") Perhaps it is vain to hope for a book that will sum up "the truth about Russia". Perhaps the best kind of treatment of so unformed a subject as the Revolution is the kind that Mr. O'Flaherty has given: a purely personal one. (It would be foolish to judge his book controversially.) What he writes, to use a word that should be seldom used, is honest. His ideas, it is true, since he refuses to correct his intuitions with intelligence, are often silly; but his intuitions remain good. His novelist's talent enables him to record his experiences with rare fidelity. The whole is rapid, entertaining, original—the journalism of a poet.

GERALD SYKES

AMERICAN POETRY FROM THE BEGINNING TO WHITMAN *by Louis Untermeyer* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $3.50)

As an anthologist Mr. Untermeyer gains from the fact that he has taste rather than conviction. His sensitiveness to the fluctuations of critical and popular opinion, for which he has sometimes been rebuked, has made the various editions of his *Modern American Poetry* a valuable record of the process of revaluation that has gone on in the twenties. The new volume gives him, obviously, less opportunity for exhibiting this sensitiveness, but the generous attention paid to Melville is a sign of the times, and the amount of space devoted to Chivers may be a tribute to the labours of S. Foster Damon.

In its general proportions the book is sound. To Colonial verse he gives little space, reserving much the greater part of the volume for the half-dozen outstanding poets of the Golden Day. His selection from these

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

poets is usually wise, though it is a question whether, despite his insistence that there is merit in them, we could not dispense with such poems as *Paul Revere's Ride, Maud Muller, The Bells, The Raven,* and *The Chambered Nautilus*. As for the minor poets, it is difficult to see any justification for including work by Francis Scott Key, Samuel Woodworth, John Pierpont, Richard Henry Dana, Albert Pike, Nathaniel Parker Willis, and John G. Saxe; Stedman prints scores of poems quite as good as the verses of these writers and quite as worthy of Mr. Untermeyer's attention. On the other hand, the amount of space devoted to Carlos Wilcox, Jones Very, and William Ellery Channing is gratifying. This inclusion of an appendix, over a hundred pages in length, filled with ballads and folk-songs, is probably advantageous, though it has to be paid for by economies elsewhere. Hasty as the treatment of each of its several divisions has to be, this appendix does give a bird's-eye view of the many different racial and sectional cultures that lie at the foundation of our national life.

In the selection of poems, Mr. Untermeyer's lack of aesthetic principles is, as has been said, an asset; in the introduction to the book as a whole and in the introductions to the various poets, it is a liability. Mr. Untermeyer is an anthologist, not a critic. His introductions are informative, and he succeeds in conveying his own very real enthusiasm, but there are few evidences of a unified critical outlook. He draws on one set of principles in discussing Poe, another in discussing Emerson, and a third in discussing Whitman. He fails to defend Poe from the charge of vacuity and Whitman from the charge of formlessness, and yet he claims greatness for both. He strangely prefers Holmes to Lowell, and he leans over backward in his effort to be fair to Longfellow.

But, whatever its faults, *American Poetry* is as useful an anthology as we now have. It will be superseded when an anthologist appears who is willing to ignore fugitive poems and devote himself wholly to poets of some importance, to print more long poems than Untermeyer does and eschew his practice of printing extracts, to be as catholic in his selections and a great deal more rigorous in his criticisms. But even such an anthologist will find that from one-half to two-thirds of his volume resembles Mr. Untermeyer's.

GRANVILLE HICKS

SINCE CALVARY *by Lewis Browne* (MACMILLAN. $3.50)

THE author of this book deserves praise for his industry, the directness of his style, and the skill with which he has threaded his way through a vast amount of material. He has read Gibbon to good purpose, although Gibbon's suave irony has eluded him, and he has studied Van Loon so diligently that he has learned to handle masses of history with a deft hand and with a sense of the drama of the past.

The sub-title reads: An interpretation of Christian History". Dr. Browne begins with the aftermath of Calvary when the disciples were awaiting the reappearance of the Master, and he traces Christian history down to the present day. In the course of the work he sketches movements, characterizes the men who directed them, and "interprets" both. His "interpretations" are rarely subtle but frequently ingenious, and carried out in the tradition of a district attorney bent on winning a verdict from his jury. For Dr. Browne's attitude is not judicial. He is impatient of the cool weighing of facts, the impersonal judgment, the scientific approach. His rôle is that of a prosecutor, burning with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

zeal, who has sworn "to do his duty" and, of course, to secure convictions.

From that aim he never swerves. He insists that Christianity is not merely on trial for high crimes and misdemeanours but that a long record of capital accusations lies against her; that in the past she has escaped conviction and the death-house not because she was innocent but because justice always miscarried. He points out alleged wrongdoing on innumerable occasions, insists that (to an unbiased mind) an accusation, if sufficiently dark, must be accepted as a proof of guilt, and leaves the jury, if not convinced, at least breathless with the speed and vehemence of his denunciations.

The little good which Dr. Browne discovers in Christianity only accentuates what he deems her inherent wickedness. He reviews her career from the hour of her birth, and no important act of her subsequent career escapes his accusing scrutiny. His attack, reduced from 425 pages to a sentence, is this: Deception stood at Christianity's cradle and reared her; in her youth and thereafter Knavery, Pride, Adultery, and even Murder, were her handmaids; she owes her survival to an alliance with Superstition, Tyranny, and Ignorance; she has betrayed every son of Decency whom she ever lured into her impure embraces; and finally her ways, now as always, are the ways of dishonour and of intellectual slavery.

In aim, method, and spirit there is, of course, nothing novel about this book. Dr. Browne is not the first writer who has sought to anathematize Christianity, who has "interpreted" history in a fashion designed to achieve that purpose, or who has considered the scientific spirit more worthy of praise than of imitation. In the end, Dr. Browne concedes the revival of Christianity since the Great War. It is then one feels that the enduringness of this thing which is his pet aversion and whose failure to expire under many a heralded *coup de grâce* so persistently eludes explanation leaves him bewildered no less than embittered, although, true to the tradition in which he writes, he proclaims that the war against it will still go on.

JOSEPH J. REILLY

THE SIGNATURE OF PAIN *by Alan Porter* (JOHN DAY. $2.50)

HAD Mr. Porter's book appeared two years ago he would certainly have been claimed as a "metaphysical": yet his verse is metaphysical in style only, not in content. So far so good; for it is surely very idle to pretend that really metaphysical poetry had very much life in it—that is, had very much more to say—after Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*, or that it has not left us a valuable legacy of pure English and sharp imagery. But Mr. Porter's style quite overshadows his content. By no test can the first be impeached or the second justified: even his love poems—which are written in the manner of one who "perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts and entertain them with the softnesses of love"—have little more than a good appearance:

> *Come live with me and be my love,*
> And we, to whom occasions prove
> Mere wandering shadows, here may see
> The shadow of stability.
>
> If our too thoughtful days are spent
> In solitude and discontent;
> If man's an alien thing; and, worse,
> If the whole granite universe,
>
> Towers, pinnacles, and heavy trees,
> All natural bulks, all masonries,
> All stuff, all bone and sinew, thaw,
> Till we see nothing childhood saw,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Till time's a mock and mist; how, then,
Poor harried strays, can we regain
A world that will not shake or move?
Come live with me and be my love.

Or this:

"Take it I love" he'll say: then pause, deliver
A sigh to shake a mountain, pucker his brow,
And train the whole artillery of woe.
"Take this for token—I with brooding thought
Annul the difference of hours; forget
All intercourse and action; reckon sums
In pints and gallons; watch blue-bellied insects
Climbing a window; start from a dream and cry
'Dear love, dear love' ".

An excellent appearance, if you like: but read *A Sophistry of Love* or *A Song to Court a Lady With* or *The Unreasonable Lover* and ask yourself if there is anything original in them, indeed if there is anything that is more than pleasant.

What of Mr. Porter's wit? Is it a metaphysical wit? True metaphysical wit died where it was born—with the peculiar conflicts of the seventeenth century: but one manifestation of it has somehow lived on, and that is an exercise of the intelligence which finds a similarity between things which are quite dissimilar and brutally divorces things that have long been joined together decently in the sight of man. Anxious readers may detect this sort of wit in *The Transit of Joy*, and there is a shadow of it in the passages I have quoted above. But it is not Mr. Porter's real wit. *That* you will find in *A Plea That Shame Be Forgotten* or *The Poet's Journey*—of which the first is just too good and the second just too bad for the sort of broadside poetry which decorates genteel tea-houses all over England, or was (and for all I know still is) read aloud by candlelight in the upper chamber of a London bookshop. In other words, it has just avoided being Georgian: and I have too much respect for Mr. Porter as poet to wish the title on him. Whether *The River* (which is Blake in the manner of W. H. Davies) and *Museum* (which concludes with jargon in the manner of Lascelles Abercrombie) do not deserve the same title is another question. And the pity of it is that *Museum* is beautiful to the eye and the ear.

Indeed, we must always come back to style, for nearly all Mr. Porter's verse is admirably constructed, simple, and melodious; and I would recommend it without hesitation to any young poet who is in need of a hornbook. It has just as much in common with Marvell and Vaughan, shall we say, as Marvell and Vaughan have with each other; which, while it is not very much, is not entirely negligible.

My sires have died: my death shall suit
Obsequious and absolute.
From childhood I have loved this tree,
Whose bounties were my memory.
The delicate green foliage made
A cavern of consoling shade,
The breathing timber joined to give
Sweet odours and restorative . . .

With Mr. Porter's blank verse we can go even further: for the metaphysical *style* was not the sole property of the School of Donne—it was the property of a period in which Donne's was the most considerable school, the period which comes between Shakespeare and Milton. And of the style of that period Ben Jonson was the best exponent. Anyone who reads Mr. Porter's title poem can see that the easy movement, the natural purity of colloquial English are in the gift of every century: that what makes Ben Jonson's verse so delightful (or Middleton's, for that matter) can be brought into our time without imitation and without archaism. Mr. Porter's mastery of blank verse is the best thing in the whole book, and we wish there had been more of it. There only remains to say that his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

style is acquisitive, not imitative—that what he uses he uses for his own purposes.

But what are these purposes? What is the thought, the emotion, the *activity*, of his poetry? *The Signature of Pain* itself is a very good—some may think it a great—poem: it communicates easily a very difficult conception, a very keen and rare emotion. But otherwise Mr. Porter only offers us hints, which sometimes have the force of insinuations, that his poetry is founded upon philosophy, thought, profound experience: and neither public nor critic is good at taking hints or should be expected to take them. Mr. Porter is a stylist—I doubt if there is a better in England today; and whether his failure to communicate is due to reticence or inability I cannot tell. If to the first, he still has a chance of impressing himself upon the mind of this century; if to the second, he will never be more than a very minor poet.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

NATIONAL DEFENSE *by Kirby Page* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $3.00)

MR. PAGE'S book may be described as a kind of pacifist's *vade mecum*. It begins with a survey of the causes of the World War—nationalism, imperialism, militarism, chauvinism, fear, alliances, and so on; goes on to the results of the war in atrocities, economic and political changes, moral and spiritual effects; and examines nationalism, militarism, imperial and economic rivalry, war debts, territorial disputes, pressure of population, racial antagonism, and the conflict of communism and capitalism as existing perils to world peace. The purpose, of course, is to show that the World War was a monster calamity, which it was; that its moral aims were largely specious and its moral consequences debilitating, which is now pretty generally perceived; and that instead of removing the historical incitements to war it actually contributed to make another war possible, a contention from which there is hardly any appreciable dissent.

Mr. Page does not seem to have felt it necessary to offer an all-round view of any of these matters, and his treatment of most of them is superficial. It is when he comes to preventive measures that he most taxes his readers' faith. He is well within the truth in characterizing as "a crude affair" and one whose immediate adoption "no sane person would advocate" his proposal of a federal Department of Peace with a secretary, ten regional secretaries and forty foreign representatives, an elaborate series of peace publications, an international university, friendship training corps, world friendship cruises, and the like, all at the modest annual cost of $100,000,000; but he nevertheless reproduces it *in extenso* from the pamphlet in which it was first made public. The project is rounded out with a twenty-point "program for patriots", the nature of which is indicated by such rubrics as "seek clearer understanding and keener appreciation of the peoples of other lands", and "go on record now as stating your present purpose not to sanction any future war nor participate in warfare as an armed combatant".

It would be useless to criticize Mr. Page's program since he is admirably well-intentioned and obviously convinced that it can be made to work. To those who, while loathing war with all their hearts and willing to do all in their power to make further wars impossible, nevertheless feel compelled to admit that human nature cannot easily be changed, Mr. Page's suggestions will seem an unhappy mixture of the useful and the visionary. It is a pity that the peace movement, of which Mr. Page is so distinguished

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and devoted a representative, cannot concentrate upon a few points where success may reasonably be hoped for, but must sweep into its program a medley of issues and devices regarding which neither unanimity of opinion nor effective concert of action may with much confidence be expected.

WILLIAM MACDONALD

DESERT ISLANDS *by Walter de la Mare* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $4.00)

ANY literary prophet who had attempted twenty-five years ago to forecast the career of Walter de la Mare would have made hardly anything but mistakes. Basing his prognostication upon *Songs of Childhood, Henry Brocken*, and the *Poems* of 1906, he could scarcely have foreseen even *The Return*, let alone the sinister quality of *The Veil and Other Poems* or the darker broodings in *The Memoirs of a Midget*; and of course if he could have prophesied such a poem as *The Listeners* he would have been able to write it. Mr. de la Mare's imagination works, like Old Truepenny, under ground, and so fast that there is no guessing where he will next emerge. As though he took delight in eluding the expectation of those who think they know him best, he comes forth now with a lecture—no less!—enormously amplified by notes that fill just three-quarters of the volume. From such a description no one could infer the fact that *Desert Islands* is a wholly delightful book and that a star danced when it was born—unless, indeed, one knew beforehand that it was written by Walter de la Mare. Add that the lecture is more or less concerned with *Robinson Crusoe* and that the notes drag a wandering net through the shoals at least of the oceanic literature concerning solitude, and it becomes clear that this book is warranted not to bore. One is sorry for those whom it will not charm, and envious of those whom it will not inform.

The announcement that Walter de la Mare is a quite unashamed "Romantic" would now be somewhat belated. To the romantic dreamer lying *perdu* and denied in every man, even in some women, he addresses this book—all his books. He takes it as an axiom that what every man wants, whether he should want it or not, is escape from the monotony of here and now, wonder and strangeness, adventure and distance and the wild. Crying out against the voices of duty and habit and even human affection, there is always, he thinks, another voice, older and deeper, that calls for the immense and sudden simplifications of solitude, for "a lodge in some vast wilderness". He asserts that there is in each of us a sort of desert-island complex which it is one function, at least, of imaginative literature to soothe if not to satisfy. And if one does not pause, at any rate on this occasion, to argue that matter with him, to quote Aristotle against him—"the man who can endure solitude must be either a wild beast or a god"—or to convict him of the heresy of "primitivism", it is partly because one takes no pleasure in breaking butterflies on wheels, and partly because he is right. A writer who has such firm hold as his upon a few enduring facts of human nature can well afford to stop his ears to the logomachies of the critics—or, if even that will not shut out the battle cries of "Romantic" and "Classic", then there is one more immunity to be longed for in dreaming of desert islands.

The romanticism of Walter de la Mare does not lie open to argument, and analysis does not exhaust it, because it is so deeply intrinsic. It is the best name one can find for the way his mind works. To convert him, if that were possible, would be to destroy him —which, in turn, would be a pity, consider-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing that in all the overcrowded ranks of contemporary literature there is no one at all like him. There is a notion current in some professional circles, among persons who have little experimental knowledge of creative writing, that imaginative work can be done according to formulae and programs issued, as it were like an architect's blue prints, to the executive faculty. What we actually get from such efforts is, of course, more or less clever simulacra of imaginative work, like Petrarch's *Africa* or Johnson's *Irene*. This comes to mind when one thinks of Mr. de la Mare because there is hardly any writer now at work who listens so closely as he does to the still small inward voice and lets the clamour of the schools blow by so unconcernedly. The present book is in fact a half-conscious declaration of his imaginative independence, and an exemplification of it.

The audacious and now thoroughly confuted literary prophet of twenty-five years ago whom we have imagined would scarcely have guessed that Walter de la Mare could ever become an enthusiastic note-taker. That is what he has shown himself to be in *Come Hither* and now in *Desert Islands*, where he annotates his own text—not ostentatiously at all but far more than amply, and with a constant sense of the humour involved in his so doing. From one subordinate aspect, the book is an elaborate literary jest, the point of which is in the elaboration itself. Almost any sentence of his original lecture-text serves him well enough as a spring-board for a dive into this or that forgotten sea of curious reading, whence he brings back the strangest wares of scholarship and times gone by. This is a delightful way of making a book. Many readers are now enjoying this book, but probably no one will get so much pleasure from it as the author had in making it.

ODELL SHEPARD

THE TRAGIC QUEEN *by Andrew Dakers* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $5.00)

THAT beautiful and doomed lady, Mary of Scots, has found another loyal defender in Andrew Dakers. His work, ambitious from the historical standpoint, is one of the most appealing of the recent personal biographies. Mary's unhappy destiny has always drawn forth the kindliest sympathies of the chivalrous, and this book with its grave sincerity creates a touching and distinguished portrait of the Queen. The beauty of Mary Stuart's character as Mr. Dakers conceives it lay in her fortitude and great strength of purpose. It would have been simple for Mary to change her religion in accordance with the easy-going fashion of the times; others with less to gain had deserted the old faith, while Elizabeth, along with many of her ministers, had been a practising Catholic until the wave of Protestantism rendered conversion expedient. As Mr. Dakers remarks, it was on the Protestant side that Mary's bread was buttered, and yet she chose to die for her religious beliefs. Mr. Dakers's study is frankly partisan, and he claims virtues for Mary that certain other commentators have denied her. There has always been disagreement about the precise degree of sincerity to be found in her religious fervour.

Then there is the hard-fought question of her moral scruples. Her present advocate believes stoutly in her righteousness, and makes out an excellent case in her favour. He denies that she had any share in the plot to murder Darnley, and goes over the grounds of the famous Lang-Henderson controversy in regard to the Casket letters, adding various observations of his own which tend to show that the Glasgow letter was a forgery. It is his contention that Mary Queen of Scots was a woman of chastity and honour, and he ad-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vances a novel theory to excuse her marriage to Bothwell following the unsavoury affair at Dunbar Castle. "Bothwell raped her—according to his own confession," says the author, "with the help of witchcraft and 'sweet waters' ", and as a result of the effect of the aphrodisiac "her yielding would appear to her as an inexcusable lapse from her standard of conduct, yet one of which she had been guilty *of her own free will*". Hence she would feel that marriage was morally incumbent upon her.

The Mary Mr. Dakers shows us was high spirited and determined, but never malicious. He quotes the lively Scandal Letter to show what manner of gossip the Queen might have circulated concerning her "good sister, Elizabeth", had she been so minded. In addition to this letter the appendix contains Letter II of the Casket Series, as well as the text of the Crawford deposition. A thoughtfully prepared index has also been provided which will please the student and must not frighten off the lay reader, who will find in the subject matter of this biography the stuff of which Sabatini best-sellers are made.

BETTY DRURY

THE BALCONINNY *by J. B. Priestley* (HARPERS. $2.00)

WHETHER you choose, at random, the sketched impressions from a little balcony overlooking the sea, done in his own brand of magic water-colours; or his droll comments on a Punch and Judy show, or on the disillusionment brought by a travelling circus which carries marvellous posters of wild animals, but whose sole menagerie consists of two small elephants and a couple of rather moth-eaten clowns, you will discover the old Priestley looking with affectionate regard upon life wherever and however he finds it. You know that he is a romantic at heart who has been—perhaps not unfortunately, after all—born in a modern age. You know that he tends toward the sentimental rather than the smart, but that his sentimentality is rarely without an ironic edge. You know that he is the high priest of the Dickensian cult; you know—even before reading *In Defence of Kindness*—his opinions on the younger "intellectual" novelists; and you can smile, tolerantly at least, to find him yearning for a world in which kindness, not cruelty, predominates. Most of all you bless him for the ever-present humour that ripples like a banner over his crusade. Possibly because it possesses so little of the silk of Aestheticism, Priestley's style has the smoothness and durability of well woven linen. His phrases are not those of the precise connoisseur, but of the plain fellow whose tastes are simple, and whose outlook is sane and honest.

RUTH LECHLITNER

LYAUTEY *by André Maurois* (APPLETON. $3.00)

ANDRÉ MAUROIS, master of biographical portraiture, has changed his subject from figures of the past to a French contemporary. His life of Marshal Lyautey, the Empire builder, is a notable biography written with restraint and insight. The direct objectivity of the narrative is a new departure. With great clearness and vividness he presents the complex nature of French history and politics, so much a part of Lyautey's record, and the influence they exerted on his extraordinary character. For Lyautey is "the Royalist who has given an Empire to the Republic".

Lyautey descends from a family long in service to France. Maurois charmingly depicts the home environment, where the Legitimist cause was revered, and also, with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psychologic understanding, the difficult adjustment Lyautey performed in serving in the army of the Third Republic. His ambition went beyond routine army duty. He was an intellectual, a man of the world, at ease in a drawing room with Proust. He contributed an article on *The Social Functions of an Officer* to the *Revue des deux mondes*, but the ministry was not appreciative of such social functions. And Lyautey was practically kicked up the back stairs into his colonial career.

Abroad Lyautey found outlets for his abundant energy in a life of action. The conservative became a brilliant man of action. From his service in Indo-China and Madagascar under Gallieni, Gouraud and Mangin —all sons of the people—the aristocratic conservative learned the business of colonizing. Maurois is careful to show that Lyautey was not the only contributor to the extension of French possessions. It is merely stressed that Lyautey, in civilizing Algeria and annexing Morocco, secured from barbaric tribes valuable colonies which no one else had visualized. He dominated the African scene with a diplomacy as fruitful as his military strategy. His romantic venture in conquest is as entertaining as anything written of the Foreign Legion. He modernized a mediaeval territory, building harbours, railroads, towns, preserved the native quarters and assisted in encouraging native art, until the country was remade. There are thirty towns in the world today which exist solely because of his administrative ability. His accomplishing such -work in a half-score of years in Morocco brought full recognition of his genius, as Maurois takes pains to point out, by the politicians of the Republic, though politically and temperamentally at odds with Lyautey.

The man is as picturesque as his achievement. Like a true aristocrat he parleyed with Arab chiefs on equal terms. They met him with ill-will and left with admiration. He was a soldier with the mentality of a Cartesian rationalist. He wanted questions presented "in logical order". He disliked army regulation and all red tape—bureaucrats found him a terror—and as he mastered the Moroccan situation he overcame official stuffiness with dexterity. It is doubtful if there was ever such an imaginative mind and romantic temperament in so responsible a public office. He appreciated the glow of adventure as much as Lawrence of Arabia. Besides, he had a talent for advertising. His showmanship sold Morocco to the French people, who formerly held the country in small esteem and worth.

EDWIN H. CLARK

RELIGION ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER: THE BAPTISTS *edited by William Warren Sweet* (HOLT. $5.00)

THIS book is the first of a series of volumes, projected by the Department of Church History of the University of Chicago Divinity School, in which are to be collected the original documentary sources for the history of Christianity in America, the Baptists being chosen for the initial instalment because members of that sect were the first to interest themselves in the religious condition of the early frontier between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi. Somewhat more than five-sixths of the text is made up extracts from sectarian histories, autobiographies, and unpublished records of local churches and regional associations. To this mass of material the general editor of the series, Professor Case, prefixes an admirable historical introduction, and there is a classified bibliography of wholly unusual range.

The value of such a work for the student of American social history needs no demon-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stration, and the value in the present instance is enhanced by the fact that most of the material has not hitherto been available in print. An inspection of the local records, many of them shockingly illiterate, confirms the well-known opposition of the early Baptists to an educated ministry and the remoteness of their contact with intellectual persons. The local societies are seen busying themselves with the private lives of their members, administering discipline for cheating, lying, fighting, drinking, calling names, and similar misconduct, and taking a hand in the relations of masters and slaves while discreetly side-stepping awkward questions about the morality of slavery. A few creedal statements, as usual of the hard and fast theological variety, appear in the records, and with them some personal declarations of emotional religious experience. One perceives that the independence of the local church was tenaciously adhered to and organized missionary work strongly opposed, and that the abolition movement had to contend with the practical argument that slaves were useful property. The early frontier was not, of course, the home of an intellectual society, but the influence of the Baptists appears to have been confined to the lower levels of such social culture as there was.

WILLIAM MACDONALD

LETTERS OF GIACOMO PUCCINI *edited by Giuseppe Adami* (LIPPINCOTT. $3.50)

WHEN Puccini died in 1924 at a Brussels hospital he had not completed the last pages of his last work. Admirers of *Turandot* and its predecessors will find in this book many interesting details about the arduous labours out of which arose so much glorious music that in the singing seem so easy and effortless. Even that other part of "the public" on whom those labours are lost may find in these letters a surprisingly attractive personality. For Puccini was a frankly outspoken correspondent who did not spare even himself: "*Turandot* is proving a frightful bore to me, so we can imagine what it will be to the public".

Signor Adami was Puccini's librettist for his last three operas, and perhaps one-half of the two hundred and forty letters in the book are addressed to him. The emphasis thus falls rather heavily upon the literary and dramatic aspects of Puccini's career; but the composer was sufficiently discursive to throw off many a characteristic musician's exclamation: "Supposing I had to compose an opera which I did not *entirely feel*?" "Let us hope that the melody . . . will come to me, fresh and poignant. Without this there is no music." "What a useless thing is art! But to us it is a necessity of both soul and body!"

The letters are grouped according to the order in which the operas were composed: they begin with the student days at Milan when he dined on beans and "sneaked in" at the Scala to hear *Carmen*, and continue to the very end. Signor Adami offers these letters as an indication of "what Puccini really was". But "what Puccini really was" cannot be briefly told. An ardent huntsman, a hater of capitals and top-hats, an inveterate punster, an affectionate friend—in all these rôles, and in others, his letters show him. He searches in anguish for new libretti; Wagner's stepdaughter urbanely dissuades him from setting Verga's *Lupa*; d'Annunzio courteously regrets that Puccini feels doubtful about a subject for possible collaboration. Ultimately, of course, he appears above all else as the composer of music, but music of a special sort: "Almighty God touched me with His little finger and said, 'Write for the theatre—mind, only for the theatre'". At the very outset of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his last not quite finished work, in a melancholy mood he wrote of "emotional art"—his own—as "a kind of malady, an overexcitation of every fibre and every atom of one's being. Without fever there is no creation". Perhaps it is this last sentence, of all in these letters, which comes nearest to telling "what Puccini really was".

HANSELL BAUGH

THE FLOWERING STONE *by George Dillon* (VIKING. $1.75)

FROM this point on, George Dillon is likely to be named with Léonie Adams, Louise Bogan, and Archibald MacLeish as one of the more important modern lyric poets—modern in the sense that this is more than sweetness and prettiness, is rather poetry of the passionate fulness of the mind and of the emotions almost perfectly balanced.

The lyric poet in America today has turned from mere self-expression in verse, from the mere outcry of emotion, to the closer weaving of emotion with thought. In this he differs from the poets of the so-called American Renaissance. He no longer is infected with something of the same fever as that which moved the poets of the nineties in England to song. His lyrics spring from no revolt, but from a saner, more analytical turn of mind which, nevertheless, perceives the fundamental importance of emotion and of beauty. And George Dillon, whose second book this is, has the technical equipment and the maturity of outlook necessary to the writing of fine lyrics of this later kind.

His poetry is limpid and clear. He is much less the mystic than is Miss Adams, for example, and his thought therefore leads him into no obscurities. He is not so incisive in his perceptions, not so intellectual as Miss Bogan, nor is he quite capable of the almost classical remoteness and perfection of some of Mr. MacLeish's latest lyrics. He is a young poet still, of about twenty-seven, and his enthusiasms are those of youth; his themes, particularly the insistence upon the vision to be held only in the moment of love, are therefore most naturally those of youth. But young as he is, there is artistic maturity in his work, and an intensity of feeling that fuses perfectly with his imagery.

George Dillon's poetry shows the romantic trend rather more than the classical so popular today. He is likely to be one of the advance guard in the return to emotions, to the search after such spiritual and sensation values as will quicken the stream of poetry once again when the swing toward neatness and simplicity and form comes to a stop. It is interesting always to observe how, especially in English and American poetry where schools of aesthetic theory are likely to be due to foreign influence, there are those poets, in every century, who, quite unperturbed by theory, go their way apparently unconscious of the significance of what they are doing, never stopping to analyze their method, and yet come, in time, to be indicative of another turn of the tides in literary evolution.

EDA LOU WALTON

AMERICA THE MENACE: SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF THE FUTURE *by Georges Duhamel* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $2.00)

THE great wave of criticism aroused by the original publication of these "scenes from the life of the future" has caused Georges Duhamel to assert again in his recent *Géographie cordiale de l'Europe* that he had no intention of writing a travel diary of his sojourn in the United States but was aiming rather at an essay on the progress of civilization with illustrations drawn from his Ameri-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can experiences. In *America the Menace* he had already definitely stated that he was merely taking America as an example of the future state of Europe, for "As yet no nation has thrown itself into the excesses of industrial civilization more deliberately than America. If you were to picture the stages of that civilization as a series of experiments made by some malicious genie on laboratory animals, North America would immediately appear to you as the most scientifically poisoned of them all". Not America then, but Americanism is the object of his indictment.

In one place in this book, the author says, "I'm not reasoning. I'm grumbling". There is indeed a definite accent of bitterness in these pages in which he attacks the cinema and its canned music as "a pastime for slaves, an amusement for the illiterate, for poor creatures stupefied by work and anxiety", in which he denounces the cult of the automobile, the immoral influence of excessive insurance, the extravagances of advertising, the segregation of races, and the prohibition law. But M. Duhamel's grumbling *is* a form of reasoning. With great common sense he invariably hits upon weak points. His pages on jazz and on organized sport are admirable. Nor has he failed to remark some of the fundamental contradictions of that civilization: the way in which, despite the utilization of "all the by-products of every operation and of every idea", the left hand still manages to dissipate the treasure painfully gathered by the right; the fact that effort is continually glorified while every possible attempt is being made to suppress it. Finally he leaves America with the following conclusion: "Natural riches that are asserted to be inexhaustible, the effort of millions of brave men, administrative ability that we are required to respect, and three centuries of conquest without a halt or retreat, have been able to produce nothing but a churlish civilization, whose hostile ugliness defies description".

In this decidedly stimulating book the author has not thought it necessary to offer any constructive suggestions. He constantly intimates, however, that only a return to simplicity can save us. We should strive to utilize the machine, and all our complicated industrial system, without being misled into worshipping it. To a Frenchman of culture, "the supreme luxury is silence, fresh air, real music, intellectual liberty, and the habit of joyous living"; and it is to the attainment of such comfort that civilization should aspire.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

DRAMATIC THEORY AND THE RHYMED HEROIC PLAY *by Cecil V. Deane* (OXFORD. $3.75)

DR. DEANE tells us that the specific purpose of his inquiry "is to determine how far the heroic play observed the neoclassic 'Rules' of the drama as expounded by the French theorists and as somewhat freely adapted by English critics, but the book may also be regarded more generally as an attempt—not, I hope, over-obscured by documentation—to throw fresh light on the somewhat elusive process whereby the English genius almost always contrives to impose its native individuality on forms borrowed from abroad". In his introductory chapter he sketches in the background of the Restoration Theatre, with its Elizabethan heritage and its numerous cultural influences from the Continent; and in the next four chapters he takes up various seventeenth-century theories of the drama, and shows to what extent the contemporary English playwrights followed them in their writings. Finally he analyzes seven plays by Orrery, Lee and Dryden.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Deane's approach is itself suggestive. The question of the extent to which theories of drama can ever actually affect the nature of the drama written and performed is a very interesting one. On the basis of the evidence he presents, we seem to see that in the seventeenth century playwrights took what critics had to say seriously; and that critics, playwrights, and even audiences were at least sufficiently agreed about what they wanted from drama to be able to discuss its technical problems heatedly. On the other hand, as we have seen, Dr. Deane believes that the "native genius" of the English was mainly responsible for the form their drama took, and that they simply borrowed the foreign rules for their own purposes; he concludes that the "rules" were useful mainly in making mediocre works palatable. In terms of a recent literary battle, he would seem to be on the side of the "creative" as opposed to the "scholastic" writers: he differs, at least in emphasis, from other recent writers on the Restoration (Dobrée, Eliot) in stressing native talent rather than form. But he is too detached and scholarly to be unduly limited by these antitheses, and his book is a very readable account of the period.

FRANCIS FERGUSSON

BIBLIOGRAPHIA BURTONIANA *by Paul Jordan-Smith* (STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. $3.50)

THIS is a convenient and thorough summary of current Burtoniana. Here are practically all of the bibliographical data formerly available only in the *Proceedings and Papers of the Oxford Bibliographical Society*. The inevitable essay of praise is free from that heavy scholarly humour and the obvious murmurs of grandeur common to the species; the set theme is freshened with recent biographical findings. Most notably, we catch a glimpse of Burton as Clerk of the Market, tasting ale and cheese and butter and wine, safeguarding the undergraduate palates of Oxford. The main chapter surveys the principal sources of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which are classified and briefly described. Several proposed sources unacknowledged by Burton are exhibited in comparative passages and shown to be apocryphal. Burton's borrowing is scientific: he cites opinions, he retails case-histories; but he credits his authority, and he reserves judgment. As literature, his book is all his own. A chapter elaborately demonstrating that the *Anatomy* was not written by Bacon is superfluous bear-baiting: Baconians, entrenched in mathematics, cannot be convinced by common logic, and no one else questions the authorship. We should have preferred instead an essay on the general nature of the revisions and enlargements of the several editions: the Huntington Library contains the first five editions, and Mr. Jordan-Smith is thoroughly competent for the task.

PAUL HAINES

CREATIVE POETRY *by B. Roland Lewis* (STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. $5.00)

THE Stanford University Press, it seems, has become the headquarters of scholars who hold that psychological investigations in prosody and stanzaic patterning will radically alter our theories of English poetry. Like Professor Lanz, whose book, *The Physical Basis of Rime*, recently appeared from the same press, Professor Lewis is desirous of destroying the old-fashioned theories which would have poetry a divine madness. He would prove the poet to be a completely normal individual, and his product a completely natural product—but one of an un-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

usually sensitive and intelligent mind. Indeed, the impulses of creative imagination suddenly assume a remarkable simplicity.

Very probably it is still necessary to go to such lengths to prove what seems obvious. We have been ruled overlong by the artificial and conventionalized ideas of prosody summed up in Saintsbury's appalling manual. But the extremes to which these psychologically trained critics go to prove every simple point make their books very dull reading. Is it possible that many people today hold that poetry is a kind of insanity, that we must have a full chapter to prove that the creative impulse is wholly human and biological? There is a great gap between the psychological proof that prohibition of expression results in emotion (anger in a child or fear in a man) and any definite reason why such prohibition of expression in the *poet* results in *poetry*. The fact that emotions are rhythmical and of short duration may be directly related to the kinds of rhythm, but does not explain their variety and artistic use. Psychological tests may give us the primary elements of poetry, but they do not show us how these elements are combined to compose poetry—and they never will.

Despite this, however, Mr. Lewis has made some very real contributions. He analyzes the English language and proves that the genius of that tongue has determined its tendency toward iambic phrasing, that Mr. Saintsbury was misguided in supposing English to be dominantly French and Latin in vocabulary and controlled by the rhythm of those languages. Other important points made in this book are numerous and worth stopping to consider: Mr. Lewis's analysis of the sub-rhythms found in every poetic line is convincing; his studies of parallelism as the basis of poetry, although not the first, are additional material toward proving that the couplet arose out of parallel lines of repetition and became, in turn, the unit out of which the quatrain grew.

EDA LOU WALTON

JENNY LIND *by Edward Wagenknecht* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $3.00)

MR. WAGENKNECHT is an avowed disciple of Gamaliel Bradford in the realm of biography, adopting with due acknowledgment Mr. Bradford's borrowed term "psychograph". He writes with charm and brilliance, and his *Jenny Lind* is a delightful study. One can forget that ugly "psychograph" word while enjoying its lucid language, its range of allusion and comparison, its broad fairness, and its sure, even sense for the Victorian period. And of course, Jenny Lind is the Queen Victoria of the musical world. She was long the reigning favourite, she was motivated by similar ideals and beliefs, and she had something of the same kind of influence in the musical world that her contemporary at Windsor had in the political. There is a curious resemblance between the two.

Mr. Wagenknecht's method is to sift the evidence before the reader's eyes. He takes up in turn Jenny Lind the legend, Jenny Lind the artist, and Jenny Lind the woman; and he treats them all equally well. That his researches have been enormous is apparent without reference to his imposing bibliography and voluminous citations. But the scholarship is nowhere oppressive.

Out of the book Jenny Lind emerges a glorious legend, a singer of the first rank in spite of limitations, and a woman who was, in the world of art, the embodiment of her age. The book is highly recommended as a delightful addition to one's general reading among the fall books.

FRED T. MARSH

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE FIERY EPOCH, 1836-1877 *by Charles Willis Thompson* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $3.00)

MR. THOMPSON begins in the middle of his "epoch" and works backward and forward at will. Possessing many interesting facts, he does a deal of arguing where these facts might suffice to prove his case. He disposes of the legendary Lincoln as one martyred to free the slave; shows truly that when elected for the second time he was a man without a party and almost without friends; further, that his adoption as a republican saint was an aftermath. The Abolitionists were the "Reds" of the day, bent upon upsetting established order. He gives the starting of the Free-Soil party by Martin Van Buren, Democrat, who had been Andrew Jackson's vice-president and himself a president, as the mainspring of the movement that was to get the offices, and much more, as "Republican". This is true.

Correctly enough, he argues that the thirty-nine men who framed the Constitution were not planning to make a nation but to perfect the loose agreement under which the thirteen colonies had been assembled into something a little more workable. The obviousness of this was tested more than once, and came near bringing a split between North and South when stalled by the Missouri Compromise of 1850, though this did not stop the Free-Soil movement. Mr. Thompson credits the idea of a solid union to Daniel Webster, who, in his reply to Hayne in 1830, had laid the foundation for what was to become the secessional spirit of the South. Perceiving that his dragon's teeth were sprouting, he spent 1851 in going about proclaiming the indissoluble nature of the nation. This lent emphasis to the Southern sentiment, instead of soothing syrup. The great man realized that his compromise was but a wretched patch.

There was ever the able and insidious John Campbell Calhoun, who had been scared into silence by Andrew Jackson. He revived after Jackson stepped from power, and by the purity of his character and the intensity of his motives was the real founder of the revolt that occurred in 1861: Lincoln, be it known, having done nothing to cause alarm below the line save to get elected as a minority candidate, thanks to the South's bolting the Democratic ticket headed by Stephen A. Douglass. Of course, there had been the provocative "Kansas" war, and the "John Brown" war, with neither of which Lincoln nor his party had anything to do. To get thus far takes six chapters. From seven on to twenty-nine the book is a running comment on events in the civil conflict between the states.

The reconstruction period and the incidental rise and usurpations of republicanism, bring the variegated volume to a close. It is a little difficult to tell from reading just what the author intended to do. This, however, does not prevent it from being interesting to a degree, as well as decidedly bizarre. Somehow the title gets lost.

DON C. SEITZ

CERVANTES *by T. R. Ybarra* (BONI. $3.00)

IT IS sanative, at the end of an era when so much American fiction has begun in hopeful dreams and ended in nightmares of despair, dreams provincial and destitute of timeless appeal, that popular interest should revive in the creator of *Don Quixote*. For *Don Quixote* deals in the robust Renaissance spirit with the relation between dreams and common sense. Cervantes laughed away the silliness of pseudo-chivalric literature, but he soared far above his original purpose and "set down in words the fate of the dreamer in every epoch, set it down with such telling certainty of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

touch, such sympathetic understanding, that even those of mankind least bothered by dreams recognize something of themselves in the Knight of the Rueful Countenance and bow in admiration to him who thus painted all men for all time. Don Quixote is alike the indictment and the vindication of dreams. His squire Sancho Panza, scornful of his dreaming master, yet unswervingly faithful to that most pathetic and magnificent of dreamers, is alike the vindication and indictment of common sense".

His great book, however, was the harvest of a life packed with adventure and observation and contemplation; it is with this life, rather than with the book, that Mr. Ybarra has concerned himself. As he remarks in his Foreword, "I have tried to show Miguel de Cervantes as contemporaries found him—as one who met war's perils with bravery; who, in enslavement, seemingly beyond redemption, kept his head high and his honour bright; who could ever summon up courage to pit against adversity; who, a prey to the cruelty of destiny, could ever marshal poise and dignity and sweetness of temper, remaining ever a man and ever a gentleman". Cervantes's life, so far as it can be pieced together today, is indeed interesting, especially since in the midst of the direst sufferings of slavery, betrayal, poverty, and starvation, he never seems to have surrendered to the romantic *Weltschmerz*. Tried as few men have ever been tried, he maintained his faith in the dignity and destiny of the human spirit.

As a biographer Mr. Ybarra is certainly romantic and journalistic. His book is as interesting as a novel. He has caught the trick of presenting his hero in his habit as he lived, and occasionally his narrative, varied by apostrophe, exclamation, and rhetorical question, is boyishly spirited and gorgeously dramatic. He tends to ignore Cervantes's intellectual life and his reading. Mr. Ybarra is contemptuous of conventional historians and occasionally accepts as facts matters about which academic scholars are uncertain. His list of twenty-two "Books Consulted" suggests the limitations of his investigation, especially in his omission of Americo Castro's monumental *El Pensamiento de Cervantes*. Nevertheless, journalistic as the work undoubtedly is, it has rendered a praiseworthy service in calling popular attention to one who can teach the present era many truths which it urgently needs to know and practise. Mr. Ybarra is especially skilful in indicating how Cervantes was borne to fame on the crest of Spanish glory which "overshadowed every land and king in Europe". He was of those Spanish painters and writing-men (of whose comrades, such as Lope de Vega, Mr. Ybarra is unduly contemptuous) who "felt the surge of new life to the tips of their brushes and pens, and saw the vision of new, dazzling horizons".

HARRY HAYDEN CLARK

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR *by Somerset Maugham* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

SOMERSET MAUGHAM invariably gives his readers a great deal more than they could fairly ask for their money. The stories in *First Person Singular* are six very good short novels, with nothing of the tenuous or precious short story about them. They are full of observation, malice, dramatic situations and vital people; and every now and then Mr. Maugham seems to be betrayed by sheer human weakness into admitting an affection for some one of his characters.

It is odd that Mr. Maugham should feel such shame at his unwilling emotion (although it may be, of course, a purely literary reluctance, and in that case the very perfection of technique), for without the grudging warmth that sometimes appears in his stories, his characters, who are none too lovable to start with, and the situations in which he places them, which are almost always distasteful, would be unbearable; and Mr. Maugham's unceasing malice would become so shrewish as to defeat itself.

There is nothing humanly engaging, for instance, in a bigamist who makes a practice of marrying spinsters and dull middle-aged widows with money. But Mr. Maugham couldn't quite help liking his bigamist, couldn't help seeing some truth in the claim that he gave his touching victims far more than their little money's worth of romance. So that when the shabby fellow rounds out his dozen wives by marrying poor Eleanor Porchester, whose girlhood had been preserved in Victorian amber for fifty years, the reader is neatly tricked into feeling it a happy ending. There is nothing at once winning about a country cousin who marries a man a generation her junior, an aesthetic young man with an eye for effects, who turns her into a staggering success. But Mr. Maugham couldn't help liking Jane, and couldn't help rejoicing when her worldly London friend was cast down from her high condescension. So when Jane discards her young husband to marry an imposing man of her own age, that is a happy ending, too.

The daughter of a thousand earls whose nature demanded her aunt's caddish and overbearing second footman for a lover comes off less successfully, and the story of George, the son of Jews who are obsessed with the desire to pass themselves off as veritable English county-family, seems to me a flat failure. The reason is that George's despair when he fails as an artist is more catastrophic than Mr. Maugham will allow, for Mr. Maugham has worked himself into such exasperation at the pretensions of the Blands that his emotion all goes into scorn for the Oriental richness and excess with which they go in for hunting-prints rather than into pity at the tragedy of their son's suicide. ("After all, it serves them right," Mr. Maugham seems to say, with vicious satisfaction at the end.)

The last story in the book could hardly be bettered. The nondescript husband of the blue-stocking writer who got good and sick of being her major-domo and entrepreneur and went off to spend his last years in com-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fort with the cook is a character that Mr. Maugham could enjoy to the full. The eloping husband and the cook shared any number of tastes in common, but their passion for detective stories was their closest bond. Mr. Albert Forrester bore his eminent wife no malice when he departed with her cook, and he bears her no malice when she announces to her admirers that she is going to write a super-detective story without giving credit for the inspiration. He continues to be without malice when Mrs. Albert Forrester's detective story is a whopping success. All the lady-author ever wanted from her husband was ideas enough to keep her going; all Mr. Forrester wanted was peace and quiet; and all the cook wanted was someone to mother. So *The Creative Impulse* has a thoroughly happy ending, and since it is all written in a vein of high burlesque the most assiduous moralist could hardly quarrel with it.

Where one might very easily quarrel with Mr. Maugham, if quarreling with an author who can provide so much genuine diversion were not ungenerous, is on the score of his being so anxious to avoid platitude in his situations that he is very seldom believable. In a long lifetime I never expect to meet anyone who acts as Mr. Maugham's characters act in their crises, and not all his wealth of plausible detail will ever convince me that their originals acted in any such manner. But that is a minor matter in stories of this quality, and there is no doubt that a day in a world where people acted as Mr. Maugham says they do would be very good fun.

DOROTHEA BRANDE

ALBERT GROPE *by F. O. Mann* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

THIS life story of a Cockney bookseller and advertising man, told by himself, makes mildly pleasant reading, no more. It means nothing beyond itself; the plot has little involution or climax; the people are vaguely familiar in the sense that one seems to have met most of them before in other novels, and one is not particularly glad to renew the acquaintance. Scenes and people are almost exclusively sordid, although some of them are also intentionally vulgar. Among the persons of the story the hero is chiefly distinguished by a sensitiveness and shrinking delicacy of mind, amounting in effect to social cowardice, which we do not usually associate with the Cockney type. Mr. Mann is highly successful in his strict but unstrained adherence to this unheroic hero's point of view, and many of the comments passed from the Victorian angle of vision upon changing manners and morality at the close of the last century have a certain quiet humour.

The least creditable feature of the book is its extreme garrulity, which enables the author to spread his thin story about a quite unexciting little business man over six hundred closely printed pages. To be told in minute detail what a certain shopkeeper had for dinner about the year 1890, where the ingredients of the dinner were purchased and how much was paid for them, how he liked the repast and what he said about it and how his wife took what he said—this sort of thing grows wearisome after a time, especially when one is not interested in the shopkeeper to begin with. The method resembles Arnold Bennett's, but the effect, the illusion of intimate knowledge, is not here attained, because the selection of detail is seldom really significant. Mr. Mann reminds one of Bennett in several ways, but he has neither Bennett's inexhaustible knowledge nor his very considerable skill in narration. He reminds one also of William de Morgan, but he lacks that novelist's pervading charm.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is even a suggestion here and there of Dickens's tricks of manner, though not of Dickens's genius.

The verbosity of this book will not prevent it from becoming popular. On the contrary. Our newspapers and popular education are producing vast numbers of readers quite incapable of thought, of discrimination, or of mental selection with regard to what they read. What they want, like Gradgrind, is "the facts". One of their most characteristic remarks is: "And here's another thing". It seems to comfort and fortify them, as though by filling some inner void, to be told exactly what some imaginary second-hand bookseller of South London had for dinner forty years ago, what he paid for it, how he liked it, and what he said to his wife about it when he took out his blackened short-stemmed gurgling pipe for his after-dinner smoke. These are firm dependable bits of information, such as one gets from all the more improving magazines and newspapers nowadays, and also from going to high school and college. They are utterly unlike the vapourish and probably dangerous theorizing that writers like Aldous Huxley try to make us buy, and equally remote from the prolonged concentration upon a single umbilicus—the author's own—that we find in half-crazed writers like Proust. These new millions of readers might well take as their motto, although in a sense not originally intended, the familiar distich by Arthur Hugh Clough:

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That whatever is is so.

Anyone who considers what is happening in English and American magazines, the gradual shouldering-out of thought and shovelling-in of "facts", or who watches the rapid decline of the editorial page in our newspapers and the corresponding spread of the tabloid, should be able to work out an almost infallible formula for success, so far as financial returns are concerned, in the writing of fiction. The novelist who wishes to "succeed" must throttle every temptation to think, judge, appraise, or estimate, and must load a great number of pages with crude details of observation. Even without such research, the literary aspirant can find his model in the casual conversation of servant-girls, remorselessly accurate and full, on Thursday afternoons: "And he says to me. . . . And I says to him".

However, there is another kind of success. The reader of the present book may be reminded, chiefly by contrast, of Frank Swinnerton's *Nocturne*, in which the scenes are no more intrinsically exciting and the people are no less sordid than they are here. But the time presented in that book is one night instead of twenty years, each incident is made significant to the uttermost, there is a beginning and middle and end, not one word is wasted, and although vastly more is said the story is told in about one-fifth as many pages as this novel runs to.

ODELL SHEPARD

ALL PASSION SPENT *by V. Sackville-West* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

THIS beautiful novel is boldly experimental, yet I venture to think that few among those who make a to-do about experiments will celebrate it. Its boldness lies not in form but in theme, and its handling of technique is designed not to call attention to virtuosity but to serve an artistic end. Its central concern is the revelation of a mind, yet instead of utilizing the devices of the stream-of-consciousness school it returns to the direct narration and simple interior monologue of tradition. And it seeks to make a full novel

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the thoughts of a very old lady, just before her death. It seeks to move us through the narration of the minute events of extreme old age and the ghosts of emotion which these events summon up. In this design we see the boldness of the venture. And in its eminent success we can measure the extent of the author's achievement.

The story is appropriately slight. Lord Slane, an Eminent Victorian, has died full of honours and been buried in the Abbey. His numerous children, a group of elderly worldlings not unlike Galsworthy's Forsytes, propose to dispose of the relict in a manner conventionally filial and least troublesome to themselves. But Lady Slane has other designs. The greater part of her life she has sacrificed, willingly, to her husband's career; the remaining days she proposes to utilize for herself by retiring alone with her maid to a little house in Hampstead, refusing the visits of disturbing descendants and tasting the luxury of quiet recollection. This design she carries out, to the consternation of her children. By chance she gains in addition the happiness of three new friendships, with old people as unworldly as herself, and a final communion with her great-granddaughter, who seems to her failing fancy almost the resurrection of her own lost girlhood, and who unlike herself will be strong enough to live her own life in a world where women are a little more free to fulfil themselves. To encourage this resolve is Lady Slane's last act.

So slight a plot, dealing with "calm of mind, all passion spent", must necessarily succeed only by the skilful handling of slight incidents, and above all only by the perfection of style, subdued to the twilight of age: wistful, humorous, understanding, dwelling in memory rather than actuality. And to the mind of the reviewer Miss Sackville-West has accomplished this extremely difficult task, not with the bravura of one proud of his skill but with the quiet, simple competence of a master, who is in love with his creations as human beings.

There is just enough of the satire upon worldliness and selfishness of ordinary humanity. By it we feel the unworldliness of the central character and her friends set firmly in a world as it is, unsentimentalized and convincing. There is just enough of that humour which is perhaps the chief distinction of the English novel, by which a sympathetic nature is revealed through ludicrous mannerisms. There is just enough introduction of the setting and atmosphere, idyllic without exaggeration or straining after descriptive effects. We are reminded at times of another idyll of old age and quiet death, the masculine counterpart to this, Galsworthy's *Indian Summer of a Forsyte*.

Above all there is the imaginative insight which is the novelist's highest achievement. One is led to fancy that to a novelist who has this gift life offers riches denied to the rest of us. What a supreme pleasure it must be to create those delicate relationships which are the reward of distinguished personalities and which are ignored by the coarse needs and passions of average humanity, when the reading of such things gives so much pleasure! "Weary, enfeebled, ready to go, she still could amuse herself by playing a tiny game in miniature with Mr. Bucktrout and Mr. Gosheron, a sort of minuet stepped out to a fading music, artificial, perhaps, yet symbolic of some reality she had never achieved with her own children. The artificiality lay in the manner, the reality in the heart which invented it. Courtesy ceased to be blankly artificial when prompted by real esteem; it became, simply, one of the decent, veiling graces; a formula by which a profounder feeling might be conveyed."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We must not ask of such a theme the vigour that is needed for ordinary humanity in the full tide of life, and we must recognize that such feminine delicacy and tact might prove weak with less congruous material, or might turn into sentimentality if attempted by one less gifted. It is our fortune that in this case style and theme are one. *The Edwardians* was a distinguished novel; this is a work of beauty.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

AMERICAN EARTH *by Erskine Caldwell* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.50)

ERSKINE CALDWELL is already known to readers of *The American Caravan* and the small magazines, but *American Earth* is his début among the standard publishers. One may not entirely like his writing; yet it is true that he is original, talented and a personality.

American Earth is made up of twenty-four short tales and one fairly long piece resembling a prose poem. One half of the group of stories has its locale in the South, the other half in Maine. One of their most remarkable features is the amount of apparent fact about things rural. Nearly all of them turn on a custom, an industry, an amusement; the foaling of calves, the manufacture of blueberry crates, the mechanics of the well, the habits of the cottontail. How much of this detail is authentic, I haven't the knowledge to judge; but, because of the title of the book and its general pretensions to reflect the "American scene", the question seems to me relevant. Two of the best stories are *The Strawberry Season* and *The Automobile That Wouldn't Run*. The first describes how the strawberry-pickers amuse themselves by dropping a berry down a girl's neck and slapping the berry. The "I" of the story plays this trick on one of the prettier of the girls, slaps her too hard on the breasts, and makes her cry. What follows is characteristic of Caldwell's lovers: they fall into an unpremeditated embrace, and then part forever. The story of the car that wouldn't run is laid in Maine. It tells of the Swede woodsman who liked to sit in front of the hotel in his ineffectual car and admire Signe the hotel-keeper. The Swede is a famous character because of his strength and his skill with the axe. Ordered to the woods in summer, when he wants to rest, he works for a time but finally outwits the boss, escapes in a canoe, and returns to the town, the stationary car, and Signe.

The stories described above are good examples of the two kinds that predominate in Caldwell's volume: the amorous pastoral and the story of intrigue. There are perhaps more of the latter kind: tales of trickery and violence, of thefts, lynchings, double-dealings, and outwittings. A strange violence is in fact appearing everywhere in the stories of younger writers: William Faulkner, George Milburn, Gerald Sykes, Charles Walker. Sometimes actual violence is described, sometimes it is given the form of the wish or the hallucination. Alongside the burnings, castrations, and ear-croppings of these newer stories, the insurgent stuff that shocked the early twenties is milk and water. What this pedalling of the savage note *means*, we'll have to leave to Spengler or Babbitt to determine. At any rate the best tales of this order in *American Earth* are those that appear in the character of the country legend, the stretcher of the Paul Bunyan variety. For this sort of tale Caldwell has the humour and the imagination. Others of the violent type are merely exercises in letting the morbid imagination range. Such are *Saturday Afternoon*, which is too cold-blooded to be true; and *Savannah River Payday*, a childish collection of horrors.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The amorous stories have some features worth noting. What Caldwell brings out is the chance nature of the sex impulse; how it hinges on the sudden pain or the sight of a suggestive object. There is no such thing as resistance among his women. Nor is there, in his tone, much of the self-consciousness, the flaunting of sex, the sense of challenge to convention, that characterized the older generation. Here it is all taken for granted.

These stories have an artless look, and oddly enough they really are for the most part artless. The whole collection appears to have been dashed off in a heat. This haste has its effect equally on form and feeling. The prose is plain, Andersonian; but it lacks the calculated plainness, the rhythms and careful choices of the Anderson sentence and the Anderson language.

The reader will remember this book for the imagination it reveals, as well as for the abuse of that faculty. The one doesn't, as a matter of fact, appear to exist anywhere today without the other. Mr. Gorham Munson, in reviewing this volume for the *Sun*, advised Caldwell to read Fielding and Smollett, with which writers he felt the author to have an affinity. This seems to me the error of a too sanguine professor who imagines that people can be internally remodelled by studying the classic interiors. Between the good-natured horse-play of those novelists and the psychological violence of such writers as Caldwell there is (to go a long way for a comparison) the same difference as between the violence of Aristophanes and that of Petronius. A different epoch, a different sensibility, a different psychology. My suggestion to Caldwell would not therefore be the "philosophic" discipline that comes from communing with the spirit of classic comedy, but the discipline that lies in a care for the word and the form.

FREDERICK DUPEE

SUSAN SPRAY *by Sheila Kaye-Smith* (HARPERS. $2.50)

THIS woman evangelist was born in 1834. Her father was a poor field labourer in Sussex who belonged to an obscure sect known as the Colgate Brethren. Through her ability to have visions and preach, as well as her prettiness and ambition, Susan raises herself from poverty to comfort and power—and marries three husbands to further her career. The last husband finances a new church of which she is to be the prophet, the Church of Jehovah-Jireh. The first services are about to be held when she receives a letter from her gay second husband (whom she had thought killed in the Civil War in America) written for no other purpose except to remind his "darling humbug" at the height of her success—though he promises not to reappear and disgrace her—that for all her religion she is "living in sin". For a moment she is upset; but after a series of feminine thought-processes that are most ably reconstructed, she tears up the letter and goes ahead with her services. This purely ironic revenge marks the end of the story and the culmination of the author's rather peculiar attitude toward her heroine. Miss Kaye-Smith has let it be known throughout that she is not for a moment taken in by Susan's visions or "faith". It is plain that as a woman she feels that Susan is getting away with murder. In fact, after a while we begin to feel sorry for poor Susan, who is being pursued by something more relentless than even the Greek Furies: by the eyes of another woman. It is conceivable that Miss Kaye-Smith, although Susan's creator, was never reconciled personally to Susan's monstrous belief in herself. She has waited to the end, therefore, for her revenge, and though her artistic conscience dictates that it be an ironic one, she has enjoyed it visibly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The story is told with an attractive straightforwardness, and Susan, who is the whole of it, is unquestionably real to her author.

GERALD SYKES

THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER *by Richard Aldington* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

ENGLISH literary radicals of the teens and twenties are ripening into the literary moralists of the thirties. One calls to mind particularly Wyndham Lewis, Aldous Huxley, and now the present writer. Mr. Huxley and Mr. Aldington especially have points in common —their satire of hypocrisy, their resolute nomenclature for garden implements, and their growing moralism. In the last matter Mr. Huxley is in advance, so much so that by the forties he will probably be writing like Bertrand Russell. Mr. Aldington on the contrary is less philosophical than lyrical, in the sense that the lyricist is one who expresses his emotions.

Mr. Aldington's predominant emotion is hate. But it is a generalized hate, which in spite of obvious personal sources is directed toward so many shortcomings of his countrymen, male and female, rich and poor, that it takes on the significance of a negative ethics. Things, he tells us, are rotten in the state of England. He has not yet prepared schemes of improvement, which may come when he has ripened still further. At the same time, in his absorption in moral problems he proves surprisingly traditional and gives some ground for an English reviewer's statement that this novel "is in the great tradition of English satire". It is not his morality itself which is traditional, to be sure; it is his tendency to moralize. He has ceased hunting for Images —to produce one of which in a lifetime was considered better "than to produce voluminous works"—and is now hunting for the values in the motives of conduct. This change from *la poésie pure*—which is poesie divorced from reflection, and from ethics in particular—to the manner of Juvenal and Swift that *castigat ridendo mores*, is of course a sign of health, showing that English literary radicals have often active intelligences and sooner or later discover the Mediterranean.

In returning to traditional methods Mr. Aldington has picked out a small English village, in which he discovers scarcely an individual in whom every imagining or thought is anything but evil. The single exception is his heroine, and her he makes ridiculous and pathetic. Georgie is the homely and stupid fruit of a marriage between the fox-hunting and the military traditions. At twenty-six her supreme need is a husband, in a land where the supply has been depleted by war. Reared to be a Lady and trained to be a good Girl Guide, she has become a mixture of ignorance, loyalty to silly ideals, and meek subservience, with the result that she neither encourages advances when advances would be crucial nor takes advantage of them when they might become weapons to enforce matrimony. Her fate is to act as practical nurse and to pedal her bicycle for indefinite years as errand girl to a witless and widowed mother.

Cleverly and with venom Mr. Aldington has canvassed the village for hateful types to surround her. There is the little serving wench, even stupider than Georgie, who yet has lovers to spare and wins a husband and home as a result of her immorality. There is Mr. Purfleet, the selfish bachelor whose meagre virility and narrow intelligence have been turned mainly to dilettantism, who is yet willing to vary his interminable monologues with discreet but improper advances to young ladies, needing but a hint of matrimony to scurry off to shelter. There is Margery, rich, promiscuous and—apparently—

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

happy. There is her crew of London literary folk, a monkey-cage of epicene obscenity. There are the representatives of the gentry, the Colonel and "Coz" and the squire, whom the author detests with an obviously personal bitterness. There is the blundering and ineffectual rector; there are the subservient but mercenary tradesfolk and workers; there is Geoffrey, who visits Georgie's family fresh from Bearing the White Man's Burden in the colonies and seems at first the model of a "pukka" English gentleman only to turn out a fatuous cad. And chief of all there is Mrs. Eastcourt. Than this old witch there has seldom been painted a more horrid picture of female malignancy masked under pious neighbourliness.

These indications are sufficient not only to explain why some English booksellers have refused to handle the book but also to show that Mr. Aldington is writing in the tradition to which belong Swift and Fielding and Thackeray. But one may join a great tradition without being great oneself, and *The Colonel's Daughter* has several shortcomings. Its style is certainly outspoken enough for modern taste; it is forceful and direct; but for permanent vitality, for appeal to readers outside England, or for distinction, it is too impatient, careless, and slangy. The characters are all drawn montonously to a cynic's scale; they jerk to impulses too completely on the dark side of conduct to be quite human. Mr. Aldington sees clearly, but narrowly; he thinks cleverly and concretely but without universality. The former lyricist is still expressing his own emotions; he feels things too much to see them altogether objectively, relatively, or sanely. Great satire needs the driving force of anger, but also the brake of objectivity. Above all it needs a broader humanity than Mr. Aldington gives evidence of.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

THE HERO *by Alfred Neumann* (KNOPF. $2.50)

THE psychology of a self-accusing criminal bent on the expiation of his crime has been brilliantly depicted by Dostoievski in his famous *Crime and Punishment*, and by Robert Louis Stevenson in his short story *Markheim*. A somewhat similar study now comes from the pen of one of the foremost German authors of today. The story is of a political murderer whose heroism is not, however, of that quality the world can acclaim, for after the deed is done, he becomes despicable in his own eyes and fails to seize the freedom that might have been his by voluntary exile. The hero is Hubert Hoff, a discharged cavalry officer, whose activities are divided between the Imperial Bar where he appears nightly as the professional solo dancer Umberto, and the National League, a militant organization of the counter-revolutionary movement in Germany. Persuaded by their executive committee that he alone can successfully overthrow the existing régime by shooting the Prime Minister—whose resemblance to Van Dyck's portrait of Gustavus Adolphus earns him that name in the story—Hoff carefully and nervously lays his plans.

The story is crowded into the space of a few days. The actual deed is hardly the climax; this is most easily accomplished, there follows a day of mental anguish so overpowering that Hoff, desperate about himself, goes to the Prime Minister's widow to try and convince her of his guilt; she believes he is under some hallucination, and shows only kindness and sympathy. This unnerves him completely, and he gives himself up to the police. They in turn have only pity for him, and hand him over to a lunatic asylum, where he finally succumbs to the physical consequences of his agonized mind.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is an excellent piece of psychiatry. It is less excellent from a detective's standpoint, for there is surely some flaw in the circumstance that the Prime Minister's secretary, who, we are told, gives Hoff "a sidelong glance of surprise and suspicion" on the occasion of their first meeting when the murderer has his mock rehearsal in the very street of the crime, should not recognize him, even without his moustache, when he is called to interview him in his observation cell at the police station. It is, however, the man's mental analysis that is of paramount interest to Neumann, not the reasoned development of the various stages of action, and he has given us a work of undoubted merit.

MARION SAUNDERS

EBENEZER WALKS WITH GOD *by George Baker* (MACMILLAN. $2.00)

MR. BAKER is opposed to Victorian Calvinism; he believes that the Church would be the first of our modern institutions to repudiate Jesus were he to return to earth. Mr. Baker believes that a woman may be a prostitute and still be a good woman, that a man may smoke and drink without endangering his immortal soul. Mr. Baker advances, as the extreme point of his radical theories, that Christ in his second coming will teach man to love woman as well as his fellow man and make marriage heaven instead of hell.

The story is of an aged rigorous Calvinist possessed by the delusion that his adopted son is Christ returned to earth. The old man reveres the instincts of this five-year-old divinity and they lead him away from his Victorian wife and church down to the warmer humanity of the London slums and the richness of nature among the hop-pickers in the country. The book is nevertheless readable because it is earnestly and honestly written and contains plenty of action and plenty of fairly effective slapstick. It has the refreshing and also the annoying qualities that one associates with the amateur.

JOHN BRONSON

THE VOLGA FALLS TO THE CASPIAN SEA *by Boris Pilnyak* (COSMOPOLITAN. $2.50)

THIS novel might tempt any reviewer into a summary of the plot, for it is so complicated that one would feel a little proud of following it through all the intricacies of development. The story is laid in the new Russia of the Five-Year Plan, with individuality sacrificed to the Soviet idea. The list of principal characters and minor characters inserted in the front of the book immediately suggests the possibilities for complication. Pilnyak, writing of a group of workers on a Soviet enterprise, indicates an impending crisis and then returns to the group and pictures the past life of each member, the interplay of passion and anger and lust, the subtle relationships between different individuals. By the time the author returns to his crisis the reader is exhausted.

Keeping in mind the unfairness and limitations of translation, we may still say that Pilnyak's writing has certain distinguishing characteristics. His frequent repetition of a sentence, word for word, a page or two after it has first appeared, is often too obvious, as if he had wandered from the point and wanted to go back and begin over. His effects are gained somewhat laboriously; his methods are at times too studied. But there are occasional passages where the writing is capable, and the tragedy which involves Edgar Ivanovich, Olga, and Maria is emotionally real and touching. Taken as a whole, however, the novel is too thoroughly involved

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to arouse that emotional sympathy which leads a reader to identify himself with the characters as they find themselves caught by the undercurrents of passion and fate.

M. N. BOND

DEVIL'S DUE *by Phyllis Bottome* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $2.50)

IN a foreword Miss Bottome says: "Nathalie von Hohenstein and Marieandel are both Tirolese figures. Max von Ulm, whom they both loved, is a Viennese scamp—and every city has its scamps. They are snares set to destroy romance, but the heroic soul becomes a legend and lives on".

The outer surfaces of the story are gay, charming, and sophisticated; for Oberhaufen is crowded at all times of the year with smart continentals come for the ski-jumping or the lake-swimming. But as the story moves on, objectively, dramatically, one begins to sense the approaching catastrophe. If Max could have lost his little hell-cat of a wife along with his string of horses, his silver-plated racing cars, and his fortune, he might have found his soul as the Countess Nathalie found hers in their mutual passion. And it would have been enough for the fine generosity of Marieandel to minister to the contentment of her two friends. The irony lies in the intrusion of Lili, the wife, upon three occasions when Max was on the point of becoming the sterling fellow he inherently was. Surely if a work of light fiction can make its readers care enough about its characters to wish their lives had been different in this and that respect, it is something more than a tale set to beguile the hours. In this day of deadly nightshade in literature it is refreshing to have come upon this clear, cool frost-flower of high romance.

NIÑA JAY DUSENBERRY

NEW ENGLAND HOLIDAY *by Charles Allen Smart* (NORTON. $2.50)

IN this novel Mr. Smart seeks to define the generation just out of college; and because he is endowed with keen perception and the ability to create character he accomplishes this with a remarkable degree of success.

A dozen young people meet at a New England home for a week-end holiday; during two short days each of them goes through some significant emotional experience or spiritual growth. The author has devoted one chapter to each character, having him describe for himself and in his own way the crisis through which he has passed. There is the story of Quin Morgan whose extreme objectivity and tolerance destroy his vigour. There is his unreflective sister, Helen, who awakes for a moment from her blissful preoccupation with the present and, because she is unprepared, finds life a brutal chaos. Winnie, a friend of Helen's, suffers from disorganized culture. Although she strives bravely to be "hard-boiled", she is frustrated by her emotional and intellectual immaturity. And there are the other young men and women at the house party, all attempting to approximate more satisfactory human relationships.

These young people are not only fairly representative of their generation, but also illustrate some of its characteristic weaknesses. The chief of its ailments might be diagnosed as "too much civilization". As civilization develops, the individual not only tends to have fewer convictions and values and a lower vitality; also he finds communication with his fellows increasingly difficult, and his isolation and loneliness more complete. This is the main reflection which emerges from Mr. Smart's subtle study of his own generation.

ROSALIND LEALE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FINCH'S FORTUNE *by Mazo de la Roche* (LITTLE, BROWN. $2.50)

THE saga of the Whiteoaks may yet stand up well with the Forsytes. True, the old matriarch who made *Jalna* vivid is dead, but her spirit still broods over the homestead and comes cropping out in her sons and grandsons. Life goes on in the Whiteoak family; Finch comes of age and falls heir to his grandmother's money; Renny and Alayne quarrel and separate and come together again; Pheasant and Piers-ploughman have another child, and young Wakefield, the youngest of the third generation, becomes a poet. From the first page to the last, *Finch's Fortune* holds the reader enthralled.

Although no member of the family is allowed to be forgotten for a minute, the story is essentially that of the fortune of the title. From *Whiteoaks of Jalna* it will be remembered that when old Adeline died she left $100,000 to her grandson Finch, and nothing to her other grandchildren or her own children, whereupon the family made things so disagreeable that Finch tried to commit suicide. Now we see him coming to his majority, the enmity of the household modified by a real desire to wish the boy well. But nearly every member benefits from Finch's fortune. Piers gets his new piggery and a new car; the mortgage is taken over on Meg's farm and she gets a trip to Florida; Eden is sent to France; Nicholas and Ernest, the elderly sons of old Adeline, are taken by Finch on a trip to Cornwall.

Here, in England, Finch really comes of age. He falls in love for the first time, and witnesses a tragic death. He learns the true value of his music. Although he spends a year abroad and never stirs out of Devon except for a two weeks' stay in London, he returns to Jalna a more mature and a happier person.

Like *The Forsyte Saga*, the story of Jalna can go on and on, and the Whiteoak enthusiast hopes that Miss de la Roche will keep up her series. Her ability to show the reader the real characters behind the surfaces of the men and women she has created is more than mere skill; it is high art. True, it is easier to make unusual people interesting than ordinary ones, but with all their individuality, the Whiteoaks are not freaks, nor even the eccentrics of the Singer class. They are men and women who stand out because the author has endowed them with vitality, individuality and purpose.

MYRA M. WATERMAN

CASTLE ISLAND *by R. H. Mottram* (HARPERS. $2.50)

IN THIS novel of English social life, the author has made it apparent that the changing tide of things is more important to him than the individual characters he creates. He tells here of the Dormer family, and in particular of Stephen, who is the son of Doughty Dormer, of Doughty's Bank in Easthampton. At his father's death Stephen is sent abroad to a French school. He comes back to be a bank clerk, goes to war and returns to marry Jean, a cousin. Gassed lungs cause him ill-health and he is forced to give up work. He dies at an early age, leaving his wife and two children to struggle against circumstances.

But what actually happens to Stephen is not what concerns Mr. Mottram. It is what happens to England. The definite change in social things, the comparison of early years and late years, the different mode of living that has been forced on many Dormer families is to this author as great a tragedy as the most personal of lives. In recognizing this preference he has written a novel that, as a novel, could be greatly improved upon. The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

early part of the book, where Stephen is a child and the Dormer family is at its most eminent, is deftly done. Here the author really is concerned with Stephen. He draws a delightful picture of childhood under circumstances that he considers ideal. He makes the young, imaginative child a close friend to the reader. This intimacy lasts for about half the book. Then the new order of things begins.

As soon as the war comes into the picture England changes. The Easthampton townspeople do not remember the Dormer family, with the exception of a few old tradespeople and servants. Stephen is living in comparative poverty with no servants and a devoted wife who does all her own work. They live in a little house designated only by a number. It is here that an old school friend finds him and when death is drawing near finds a sudden fellowship with this man who never was so close to him in their school days. Mr. Ginever takes the responsibility of Stephen's family on his own shoulders. All this latter half of the book rushes on to point the author's conclusion. Stephen is no more an individual, he is a symbol. Jean, his wife, is a character that never comes very much to life. Ginever is a mouthpiece created to talk about the old order and the new. The book closes on this note.

Despite the sociological trend of this novel, Mr. Mottram is too fine a literary artist not to write with great feeling and slow, quiet prose. He has a quality in his words that is a combination of irony and love. It is hidden under the placidity of his sentences, but not too deeply to elude a perspicacious reader. *Castle Island* is written with honesty and sincerity, in a prose that has richness and charm.

ELIZABETH SANDERSON

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE, LIFE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, IN COÖPERATION WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF AMERICA

It is worth while to call attention again to the relation of the movies to the public's reading taste. Example: the return to the Monthly Score of *An American Tragedy*, which dropped out three years ago but is back again because of the nation-wide showing of the film. And, speaking of the dramatic arts (if that is what the movies are), people do read plays. *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* in book form reaches the millions who have not had a chance to see Katharine Cornell in the play during its long New York run.

With a fourth book on Russia in the "general" list this month, we seem to detect a reddish tinge to the public's lines of thought. Maybe it's only curiosity, but if we were a political prognosticator we'd take notice of this. —F. P. S.

NOVELS

1. SHADOWS ON THE ROCK	*Willa Cather*	KNOPF
2. THE GOOD EARTH	*Pearl S. Buck*	JOHN DAY
3. YEARS OF GRACE	*Margaret Ayer Barnes*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
4. THE ROAD BACK	*Erich Maria Remarque*	LITTLE, BROWN
5. A WHITE BIRD FLYING*	*Bess Streeter Aldrich*	APPLETON
6. GRAND HOTEL	*Vicki Baum*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
7. THE BRIDGE OF DESIRE	*Warwick Deeping*	MCBRIDE
8. RED PEPPER RETURNS	*Grace S. Richmond*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
9. FATHER	*"Elizabeth"*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
10. THE SIXTH JOURNEY*	*Alice Grant Rosman*	MINTON, BALCH
11. SEED	*Charles G. Norris*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
12. AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY	*Theodore Dreiser*	LIVERIGHT

GENERAL

1. EDUCATION OF A PRINCESS	*Marie, Grand Duchess of Russia*	VIKING
2. THE STORY OF SAN MICHELE	*Axel Munthe*	DUTTON
3. GREEN HELL	*Julian Duguid*	CENTURY
4. NEW RUSSIA'S PRIMER	*M. Ilin*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
5. RED BREAD	*Maurice Hindus*	CAPE & SMITH
6. HUMANITY UPROOTED	*Maurice Hindus*	CAPE & SMITH
7. JUNGLE WAYS	*W. B. Seabrook*	HARCOURT, BRACE
8. DAWN	*Theodore Dreiser*	LIVERIGHT
9. MIRRORS OF 1932*	*Anonymous*	BREWER, WARREN & PUTNAM
10. THE BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET*	*Rudolf Besier*	LITTLE, BROWN
11. LITTLE AMERICA	*Richard E. Byrd*	PUTNAM
12. THE SOVIET CHALLENGE TO AMERICA*	*George S. Counts*	JOHN DAY

* This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(*Continued from page 307*)

whom must be given considerable credit for this juster appreciation of the man who laboured with such cheerful courage and with such devotion to literature. They are Professor Edmund Blunden, Dr. Alexander Mitchell of Edinburgh, and Mr. Luther A. Brewer, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. All three men have been inspired by personal affection for Hunt; and all three are book-collectors—if not, perhaps, to the same extent. Professor Blunden is best known for a series of effective writings on Hunt which culminated in his admirable *Life* of the poet and essayist. It would have been ill-fitting had not one of this trio of enthusiasts been an American, for Leigh Hunt was the son of a Barbados clergyman and his wife, Mary Shewell of Philadelphia; and never was parentage so reflected in a man's character and physique. Mr. Luther Brewer, while not the only collector of Hunt among his countrymen, has for years been the leading specialist in this author; and in a typically thorough way has his pursuit become famous on both sides of the Atlantic. Always collecting with discrimination and boldness, his Leigh Hunt library must be easily the finest in the world. Few recent years have passed but what some elegant and well-written booklet from Cedar Rapids has added something to our knowledge of Hunt and his contemporaries. And now Mr. Brewer's life work is to be rounded off with a catalogue of his Hunt first editions and manuscripts and his fascinating Huntiana, which in three volumes (now preparing for the press) will be unrivalled as a contribution on the "Cockney" school and its head. Dr. Alexander Mitchell has been no less zealous in the cause, although perhaps less demonstrably. He has compiled an extensive Bibliography of Hunt; and if I express the personal view that the notes are the best part of that useful piece of pioneer work, it is because Dr. Mitchell is first the critical student, and secondly a bibliographer.

WOMAN COLLECTORS

What country has most women book-collectors? America, without a doubt; and I base the statement on reliable statistics which I have had the advantage of looking over. Although Albert Cim gives accounts of some 600 women collectors in history, the fair sex for ages suspected this pastime of man's. The old idea was that woman could only see books as gatherers of dust and a secret drain on the family purse. The idea is as out of date as the crinoline or the male guest who puffed his surreptitious smoke up the bedroom chimney. Today the number of women collectors, especially American and English, is steadily increasing. Queen Mary is not an omnivorous collector, and she does not specialize. But she likes to browse in her favourite bookshops and treasure-houses of objets d'art; and her judgment and purchases are invariably shrewd. Princess Mary is said to have begun an unusual collection of books both British and foreign dealing with Oxford University. It was her grandmother who possessed a collection of books artistically bound by herself. Queen Victoria, as an amateur bookbinder, several times exhibited her work and obtained honours for it under the pseudonym of "Miss Matthews". Formerly, however, it was France who could boast the longest roll of women collectors, which recalls to me the name of the nineteenth-century dame, Esther Guimont, who hoarded both books and love-letters. She used to say of her friend Emile de Girardin: "Imagine it! I have eight hundred letters from him—all compromising; and he does not want to get them back!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BOOK MART

FOREIGN BOOKSELLERS

That Book You Want! We hold 2,000,000 vols.; new, secondhand, out-of-print, every conceivable subject. Also Rare Books and Sets of Authors. Books on approval. Outline requirements and interests; catalogues free (20 issued).
FOYLES, Charing Cross Road, London, England

CATALOGUES of a large and varied stock of OLD and MODERN FIRST EDITIONS and GENERAL LITERATURE will be sent gratis on application to
J. A. ALLEN & CO.
Specialists in the Personal Service that finds your "Wants"
16 GRENVILLE ST., LONDON, W.C. 1 (ENG.)

The
FIRST EDITION BOOKSHOP, LTD.
October catalogue of fine copies of Rare Modern First Editions now ready and sent post free on application
56 Brook St., London W.1

RARE BOOKS
Modern First Editions and Autograph Letters
RAPHAEL KING, 6 Bloomsbury St., London, W.C.1., England
Telephone No.: Museum 7823.

E. von SCHERLING
Leyden (Holland)
31a
Vreewijkstraat

JUST OUT:
Rotulus, a Quarterly Bulletin for Manuscript collectors, vol. 1, 2, with catalogue containing many classics, an unpublished commentary on the gospels, early 9th century vellum ms., etc. Free on request.

RARE BOOKS and FIRST EDITIONS
Please send for our catalogue
The VARDA BOOKSHOP, Ltd.
189 High Holborn London, W. C. 1, Eng.

RARE BOOKS & FIRST EDITIONS
1600—1930
FINE COLLECTORS' COPIES
New Catalogue No. 27, now printing. Post free
MAJOR HARTLEY CLARK,
18 Hertford St., London, W. 1

A-HUNTING WE WILL GO!

There were some features in one of the neat well-packed catalogues issued recently by the Scarce Book Department of J. & E. Bumpus (350 Oxford Street, London) which made me linger over it. For example, an unusual "run" of Coaching books was headed by Carnegie's *An American Four-in-Hand in Britain* (New York, 1883), which in half-morocco and gilt top (the book, not the coach!) was catalogued at four dollars only. Only three heads away was another book, *A Loose Rein, Fair Diana, and Hunt-Room Stories and Yachting Yarns* (3 vols., coloured illustrations, 1884-7). This work was by "Wanderer", who is identified by the cataloguer as E. H. D'Avigdor. The book is not known to me; but if it is as jolly as its title—well, the going must be good. Between the same covers the cataloguer had drawn no less than fifty items on hunting, with early in the field Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting* (1st edn., 1781; with the Frontispiece by Bartolozzi). Sporting books provide a popular interest among collectors; and for those who specialize in this field I should be inclined to recommend the various books describing the tours, in coaches and carts, of J. J. Hissey. Individual items are now obtainable at under five dollars each.

JOHNSONIANA

There are so many private and public libraries in the United States rich in collections of Johnsoniana, that a line or two should be spared here to record the notable acquisition by the John Rylands Library at Manchester of over 3,000 letters, manuscripts, note-books, and family papers by or referring to Dr. Johnson. Much of the material is unpublished; and as it throws new light on the Johnsonian circle, and especially on the famous friendship with the Thrales, its importance will be realized. There are several

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED